

STRANGE SUSPENSE

The Steve

Ditko Archives Vol. 1

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Edited by Blake Bell

Fantagraphics Books

INTRODUCTION

By Blake Bell

"Today's efforts are a far-cry from those Golden Years of comics — before the code and when EC was setting the standards."

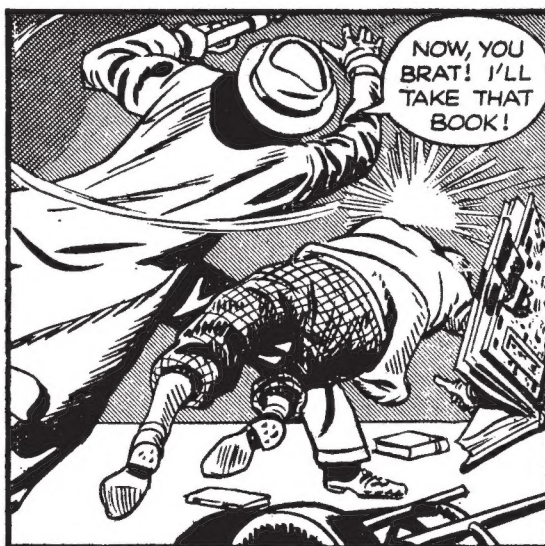
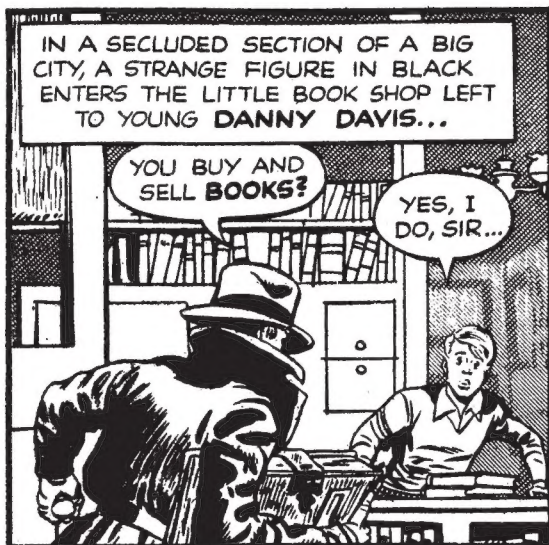
— Steve Ditko, September 3rd 1959, letter to Mike Britt

BEFORE THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, before Dr. Strange, before the Ayn Rand-inspired Mr. A, Steve Ditko made his debut as a published comic-book artist at the tail end of those "Golden Years of comics." It was in 1953 and 1954 when a young Ditko began to set his own standards — which comprise the contents of this first volume of the *Ditko Archives* — spurred by the burst of creativity from the artists working for EC Comics, who defined that gold standard with its line of crime, horror, and science fiction books.

The stories here represent a unique period in the ten-years-away-from-being-famous period of the artist's career, produced at the end of what is regarded as the "Pre-Code" era in comic-book history. The industry had been guided by one editorial principle: to publish anything that would sell, the impact on the psyche of their young readers be damned. In the post-WWII era, superheroes began

to wane in popularity and in 1950 EC introduced classic horror titles like *The Vault of Horror*, *The Haunt of Fear*, and *The Crypt of Terror* (later renamed *Tales from the Crypt*) to an unsuspecting populace. Profitability came quickly, as did the hordes of imitators. Pushing this new genre to graphic excess for increased sales became commonplace.

But 1950s America was not the Summer of Love, nor was it the free-wheeling '70s, and the determination to maintain a strong perception of morality and family values was powerful, especially as it related to the country's youth. The psychiatrist Dr. Fredric Wertham published the best-selling book *Seduction of the Innocent*, which argued that there was a correlation between comic-book images and the corruption of American teenagers, giving the movement against comic books greater steam. The Kefauver hearings, a Senate Subcommittee created to investigate juvenile delinquency in the United



States, followed, as did increasing pressure on comics publishers from parent groups and the magazine distributors who controlled the newsstands.

Fearing a country-wide consumer backlash that would adversely affect sales, the industry established the Comics Code Authority, adopted on October 26, 1954. Many of the C.C.A. regulations specifically targeted EC titles, effectively driving the company out of the comic-book business.

Ditko's comment above reflects the material that came out in the "Post-Code" era. With the industry having effectively censored itself before a single law passed, an artist's ability to innovate and speak with anything resembling a personal vision was jettisoned in favor of bland, repetitious material so as not to attract the attention of skittish parents worried about their children's comics reading habits.

With Ditko's early personal history being somewhat of a "locked drum," it's difficult to ascertain where the seeds may have been planted that would see him craft such flamboyant scenes of decapitation, acid baths, and eye gouging. There is little evidence in his youth of anything but an ordinary, small-town American life in the Depression and WWII years. Born in 1927, Ditko grew up in Johnstown Pennsylvania surrounded by lots of family, but was always considered by his peers as a teenager of quiet and reserve, traits that seemed to follow him into his early professional days in comics. While not one to shy away from social interaction, he was never regarded as the center of attention, certainly never referred to as a "ladies' man" or known to have been a public drinker — a "man's man" as others in his circle, like the hard-living, prolific Charlton writer Joe Gill, might be called.

There's also little evidence available as to cartoonists whose work Ditko admired. Following high school in Johnstown, Ditko joined the U.S. occupational army after the war and this enabled him to receive funding from the G.I. Bill to attend The Cartoonists & Illustrators School (now The School of Visual Arts) in New York City in 1950. Ditko counts Batman artist Jerry Robinson as his primary influence (in fact, Ditko would attend the C&I School to



Above: *Strange Fantasy* #9 (Dec '53): early work attributed to Ditko and perhaps a peer/fellow student. Note the "SS" signature in the splash panel (perhaps referring to "Steve Ditko" and "Seymour Moskowitz" combination?). Opposite: *Captain 3-D* (Dec '53): Ditko uncredited inks (with other possible hands on this page) Mort Meskin during their time at the Simon & Kirby studio.

be taught directly by Robinson), and was also an early fan of Will Eisner's work on *The Spirit*.

Ditko's penchant for drawing graphic horror scenes was apparently driven by an unbridled work ethic and by an interest in the trends of the day: when a publisher shifted in a particular editorial direction and said "this is what we need," Ditko geared all his imaginative powers towards producing the best work he was able to within those parameters.

Ditko pursued a level of excellence at a level far beyond many artists who entered the field giving minimal effort toward a product that was considered disposal pap for kids, biding their time until a



Above: *Black Magic* #27, last page: the printed version replaced the last empty/text-only panel with an ad for pimple cream! See page 31. Opposite: *Black Magic* #29 (Mar '54): splash page to "Madame Cyanide And Mr. Tricks"; one of Ditko's earliest stories, done for the Simon & Kirby studio.

more lucrative and prestigious gig in advertising or newspaper strips came along. Ditko would become one of the most distinctive stylists comic books have ever seen from the moment he put pen to paper. He created a unique vernacular of how people moved on the page and how his characters showed emotions, emphasizing the use of hands and legs to create space, and using the characters' eyes to express panic, anxiety, loneliness, and remorse in a fashion that had never been seen before or surpassed since. And from his teacher Robinson, Ditko says he learned the "basics of art — perspective, composition, anatomy, drapery, light and shade, storytelling, etc. You can't really draw anything well unless you understand the purpose of that drawing (storytell-

ing), the best way to get the drawing across (individual point of view — composition), and convincingly (perspective, anatomy, drapery, light and shade)."

Ditko pursued a career while attending school, consistently making the rounds at the various New York publishers, and while his initial work impressed everyone who saw it, his opinion of his work during this time is anything but flattering. Said Ditko in a September 30, 1959 letter to Mike Britt: "If Robinson had seen some of that stuff, he'd have me shot. But there's a big difference in knowin [sic] what's right and having time to apply everything properly. I'm not alabing [sic] the things I did, a lot of it was pure junk but now I'm in a position to do better and I hope I am."

The "junk" that started Ditko's career is the first story in this collection: "Stretching Things," which ended up being published after two stories he subsequently did (the *Daring Love* and the first *Black Magic* story) in *Fantastic Fears* #5, which led to his acceptance into the Joe Simon/Jack Kirby studio that would see Ditko produce the three *Black Magic* stories included within this volume. "The first story I did," wrote Ditko in another letter to Britt on October 23, 1959, "I took around as a sample and was able to get work...and turned out some real junk for their *Black Magic* magazine. That stuff was really bad."

When work dried up at the studio, Ditko made another trip back to an all-in-one publishing house that cemented a working relationship lasting over 30 years. "I had been around to Charlton Press on my earlier rounds and now they had an opening and I went to work for them. At this point I quit looking for work. The old Charlton Press was very good to me. I had all the work I could handle and a free hand in any way I wanted to do the story. Since I was still going to school in the evenings at the time, I figured it would be better to stick strictly with them and try to develop myself... About that schooling, don't let that part time bit fool you. I've been drawing ever since I was in high school and that adds up to a lot of hours, days, and years."

While one laments that there is not more Pre-Code work by an "unbridled" Steve Ditko, especially

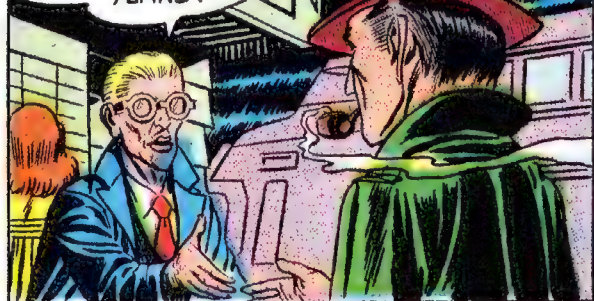
Are there really such creatures as witches? Perhaps, you may learn the answer from---

MADAME CYANIDE and MISTER TRICKS!



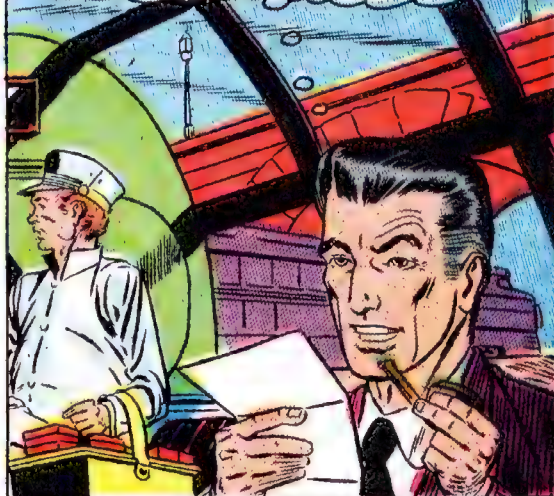
"SAM BURTON'S LETTER BROUGHT ME TO HARKER FALLS. APPARENTLY, HE HAD FORGOTTEN THIS WAS THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. FOR HE WAS THE WRITER OF THE LETTER CONCERNING THE WITCH."

NICHOLAS DANA! AM I **GLAD** TO SEE YOU! EXCEPT FOR SOME GREY HAIR YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED A BIT IN FIFTEEN YEARS.



"NICHOLAS DANA IS MY NAME, BUT MY ENEMIES CALL ME '**MISTER TRICKS**'. BY ENEMIES, I MEAN THE PHONY MEDIUMS, CON-MEN AND CRACKPOTS WHO PREY ON THE SUPERSTITIOUS FEARS OF JOHN Q. PUBLIC. MY JOB IS EXPOSING THEM."

WELL! I'M TO UNCOVER A **WITCH!** THE CHARACTER WHO'S WORKING THAT OLD GIMMICK MUST HAVE MORE NERVE THAN IMAGINATION.



"SAM DROVE ME TO A LOCAL HOTEL. AFTER SHAVING AND SHOWERING, I MET SAM IN A SMALL RESTAURANT NEAR THE HOTEL."

WELL, SAM, LET'S GET DOWN TO **BUSINESS**. I WANT TO HEAR THE WHOLE STORY FROM THE VERY BEGINNING!



as he progressed as an artist during his peak years, observers of the medium are fortunate to have this two-year window into Ditko's uncensored palette. While other companies were already "dialing down" by 1954 due to the specter of the impending Comics Code Authority, Ditko was indeed fortunate to find regular work at Charlton Comics. This was a company well known for not giving a damn as to what appeared between the covers of the books as long as the covers moved product and as long as their 24/7 printing presses, housed in their giant corporate compound in Derby Connecticut, kept running as many hours of the day as possible.

His work from this era features numerous bows to his boyhood heroes Robinson and Eisner, but also takes many cues from one of his Simon/Kirby studio mates, Mort Meskin (Ditko would compose an ode to Meskin in the March 1965 issue of the fanzine *The Comic Reader* that reads like a manifesto of Ditko's own artistic philosophy of the importance of storytelling versus "eye-catching gimmicks"). Ditko too displays a fascination with the artwork of his contemporary Joe Kubert. A number of examples from Ditko's work in this volume show remarkable similarities to Kubert's work of his era in page composition, facial rendering, and lighting techniques.

Also impressive in this volume is Ditko's versatility, his ability to handle any genre with aplomb, from horror to western to crime to romance to space adventures. Says artist Dick Giordano, who worked for Charlton when Ditko began making his presence known: "Editor Al Fago made the assignments and packaged the books in New York. I saw Ditko's originals at Fago's home. My studio was in the Bronx, so Ditko and I never met, but I was very impressed by his compositions, action, and the unique, stylized art. Steve stood alone in having a different vision. The rest of us had obvious influences."

The stories presented here are unique in another fashion: in mid-'54, Ditko contracted tuberculosis and went back to his parents' home in Johnstown to recover. He would not recover and return to New York City until late 1955, where his first work for Marvel Comics would appear before a return to Charlton. And while he would make a very distinct stylistic leap in 1956, Ditko's Pre-Code era comics within these pages are worth examining as not only a starting point for one of the industry's premier creators, but because it's enjoyable to watch Ditko's unfiltered imagination conjuring up dastardly images of the horrors contained within his singular imagination.



MOST PEOPLE **LEARN** TO OVERCOME THEIR HANDICAPS, **LAWRENCE DAWSON**, BUT NOT YOU! **THESE** PEOPLE BECOME STRONGER, BETTER CITIZENS FOR THEIR EFFORTS... BUT **NOT YOU**. YOU'VE BEEN PLAGUED SINCE EARLY CHILDHOOD WITH BRITTLE BONES AND HAVE REFUSED, EVER SINCE, TO BE ANYTHING BUT **ERRATIC AND DESPONDENT**. TO **YOU**, PLACING **ANY** VALUE OF LIFE IS...

STRETCHING THINGS

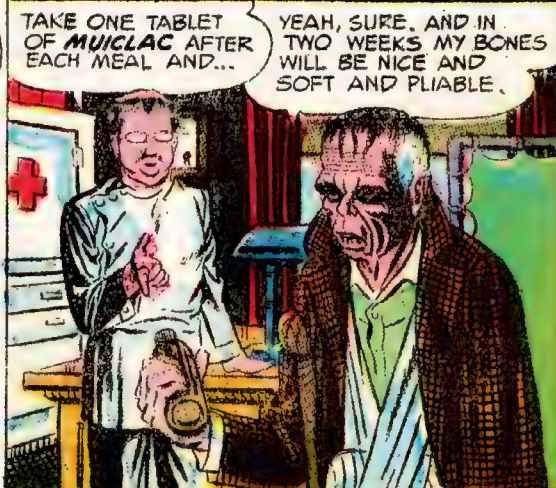


YOU CURSE, EVEN THOUGH THE PHONE AWAKENS YOU FROM A TROUBLED SLEEP, IT'S YOUR DOCTOR, **JAMES BOYLE**.



WHAT'S AT? YOU'VE INVENTED **WHAT?**... IMPOSSIBLE! **NOTHING** CAN STOP MY BONES FROM BREAKING! ... ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT, I'LL DROP BY THIS AFTERNOON, HUMPH!

YOUR APPOINTMENT TIME COMES, BUT YOU'RE STILL TOO CYNICAL TO BE IMPRESSED.



TAKE ONE TABLET OF **MUCLAC** AFTER EACH MEAL AND...

YEAH, SURE. AND IN TWO WEEKS MY BONES WILL BE NICE AND SOFT AND PLIABLE.

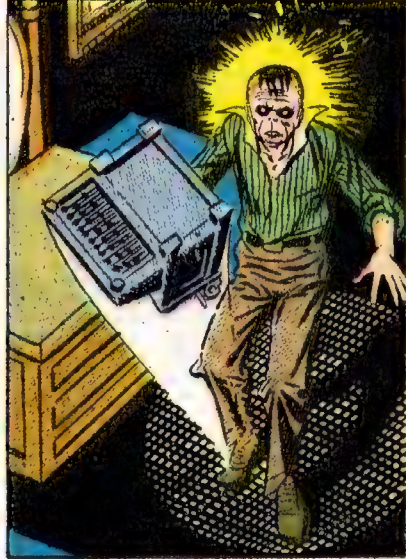
TIME PASSES AND YOUR BONES HEAL! BUT YOUR **DISPOSITION** SEEMS TO BE INBRED...



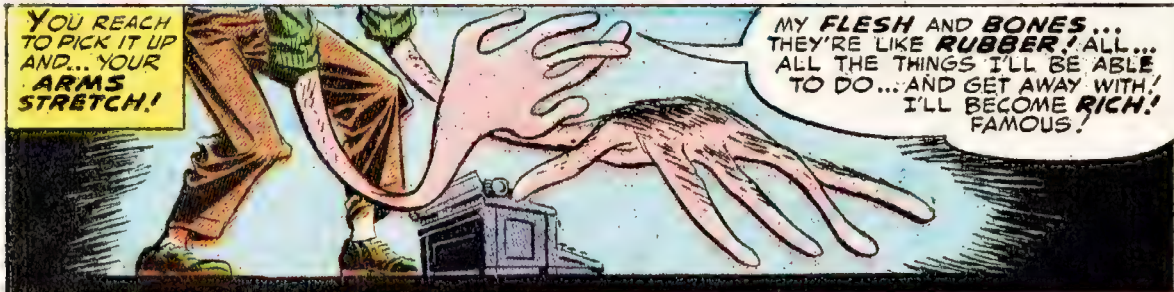
YOU SHUDDER IN HORROR AS YOU FEEL THE TYPEWRITER **SQUASHING** YOUR FOOT...



BUT THERE IS **NO PAIN!** YOU GASP AS YOU SEE THE MACHINE **ACTUALLY BOUNCE!**



YOU REACH TO PICK IT UP AND... YOUR **ARMS STRETCH!**



MY **FLESH AND BONES**... THEY'RE LIKE **RUBBER!** ALL... ALL THE THINGS I'LL BE ABLE TO DO... AND GET AWAY WITH! I'LL BECOME **RICH!** FAMOUS!

THEN, A **REALIZATION!** THE DOCTOR... HE STILL KNOWS THE FORMULA! HE MIGHT GIVE IT TO **SOMEONE ELSE!** THEN WHERE WOULD HE BE?

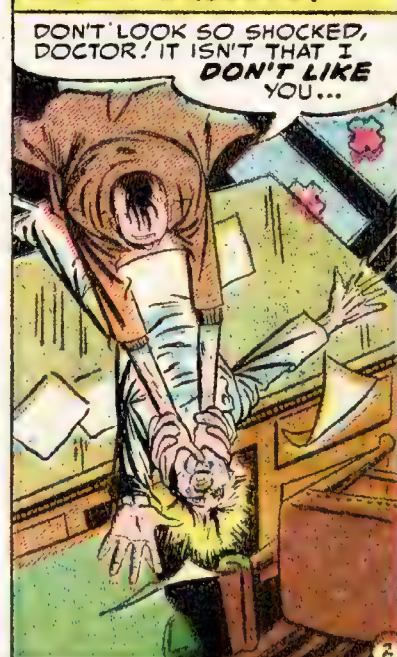


YOU CALL DR. BOYLE FOR AN APPOINTMENT!

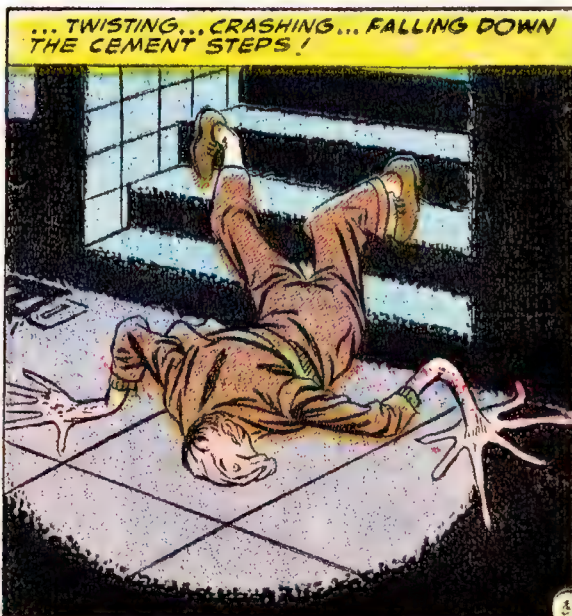
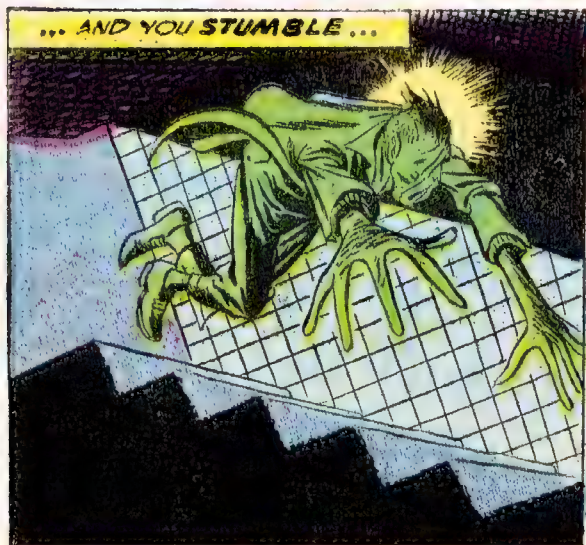
THAT'S RIGHT! I JUST WANTED TO BE SURE YOU'RE IN! I'LL BE THERE IN HALF AN HOUR! I WANT TO SHOW YOU... SOMETHING!

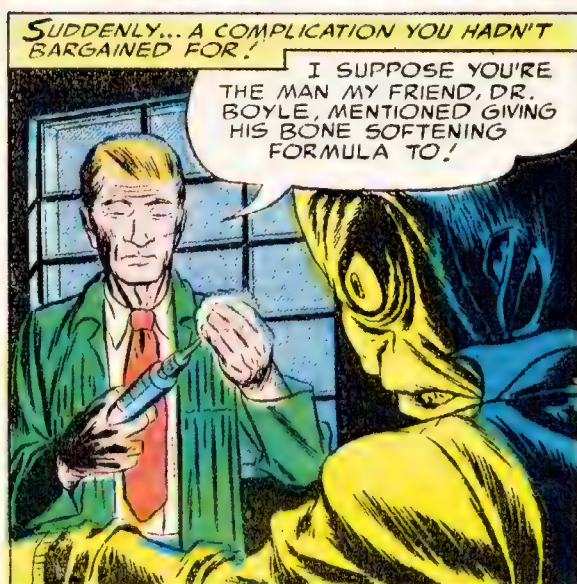
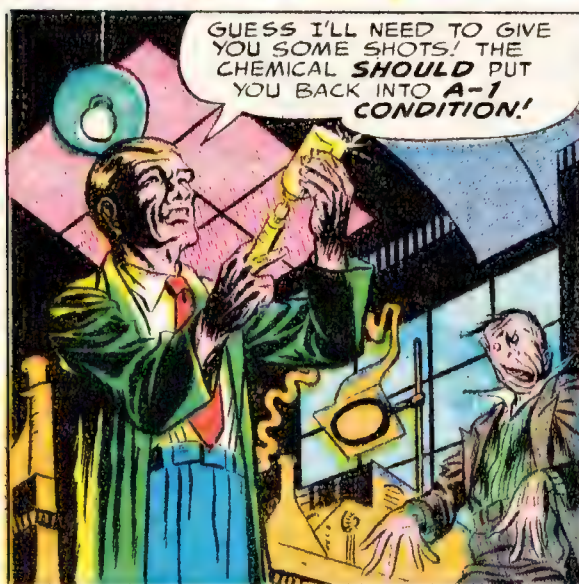
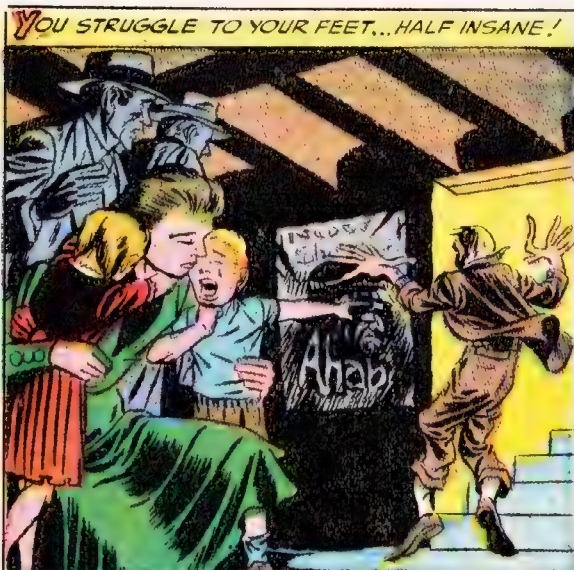


YOU ENTER HIS OFFICE AND ATTACK WITHOUT WARNING! YOU WRAP YOUR FINGERS AROUND AND AROUND HIS NECK AND THEN... THEN YOU **SLOWLY SQUEEZE!**

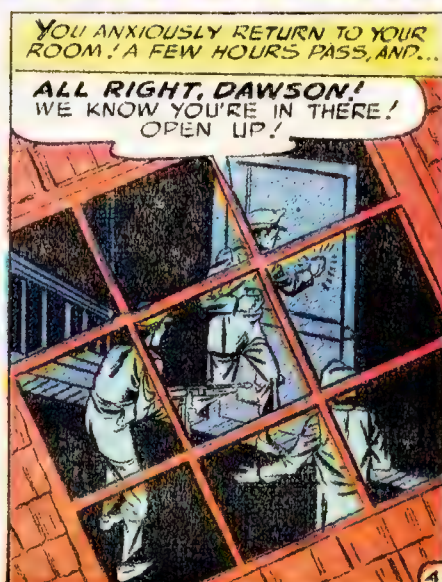


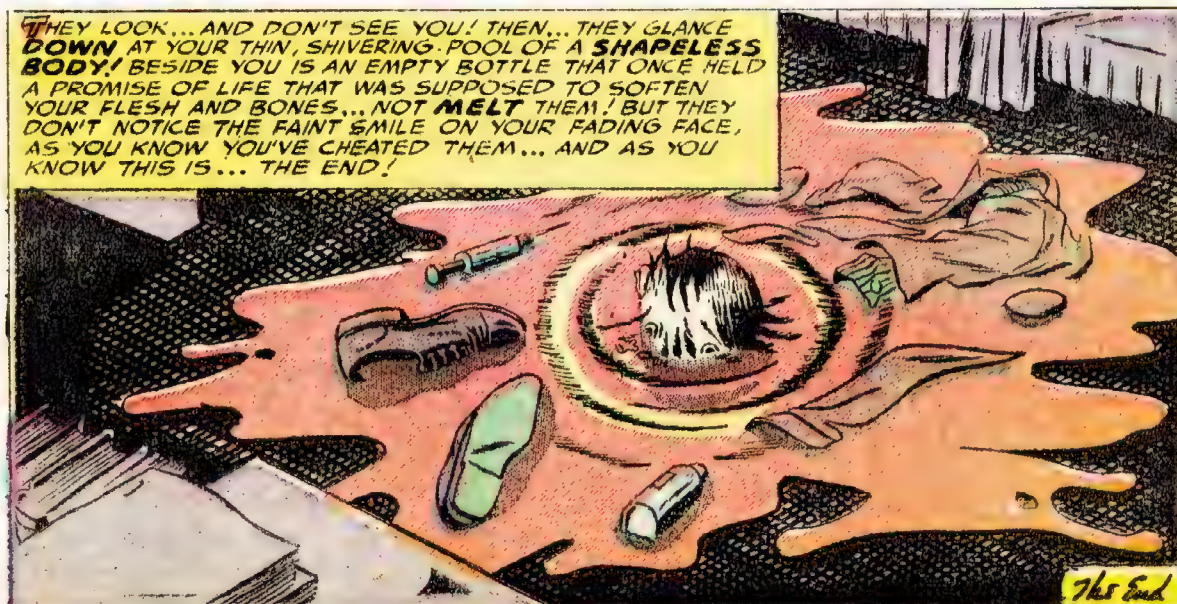
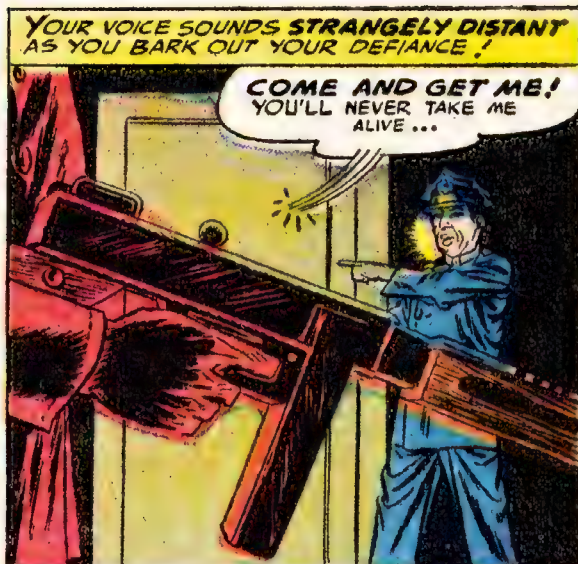
DON'T LOOK SO SHOCKED, DOCTOR! IT ISN'T THAT I **DON'T LIKE** YOU...





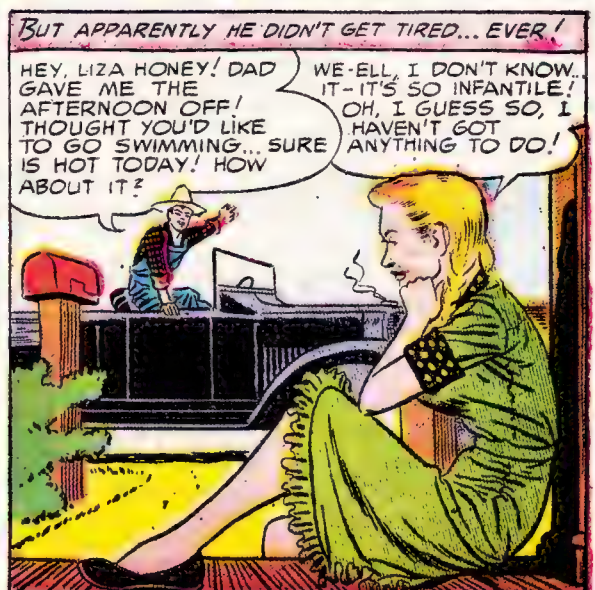
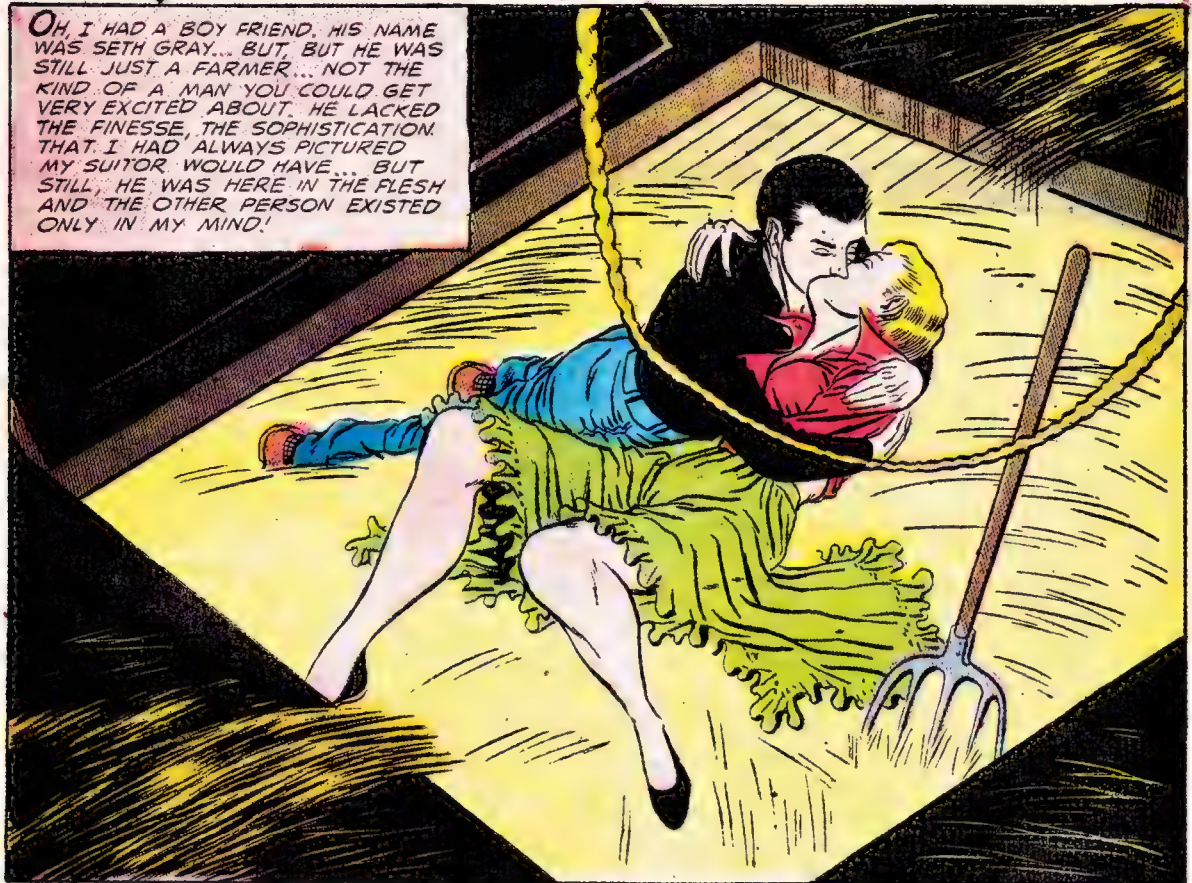
YES, LAWRENCE DAWSON, YOU KILLED THE MAN WHO GOT YOU INTO THIS CONDITION, AND NOW YOU'VE MURDERED THE MAN WHO OFFERED YOU A SOLUTION! BUT... IN YOUR HASTE... YOU DIDN'T LET HIM LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO TELL YOU THE FLUID MEASUREMENTS FOR THE SYRINGE! MEANWHILE, THE POLICE DISCOVER THAT YOU WERE DR. BOYLE'S LAST VISITOR... HE HAD RECORDED YOUR APPOINTMENT!

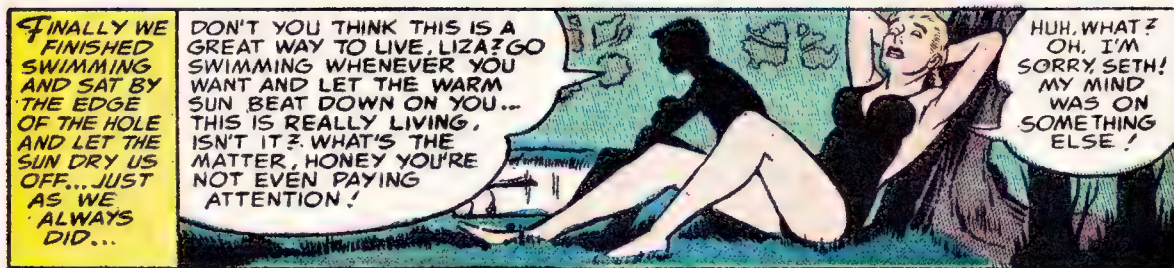
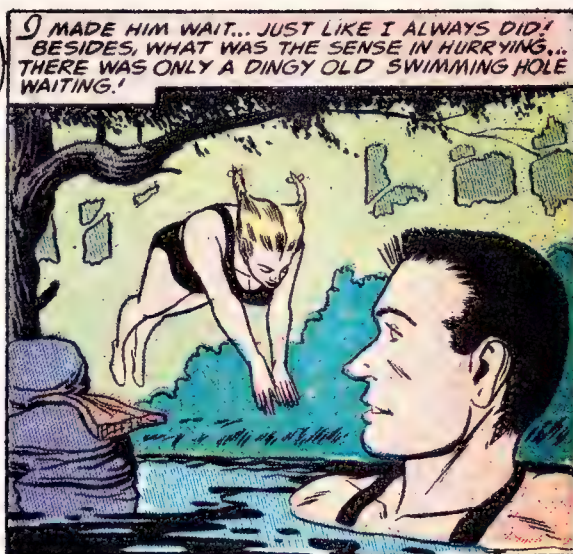
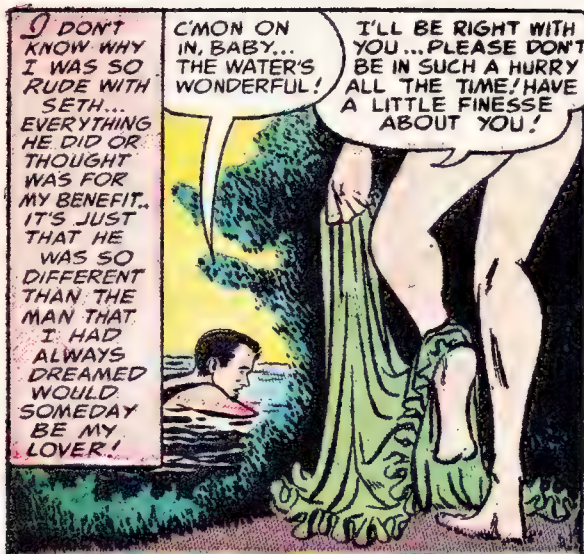




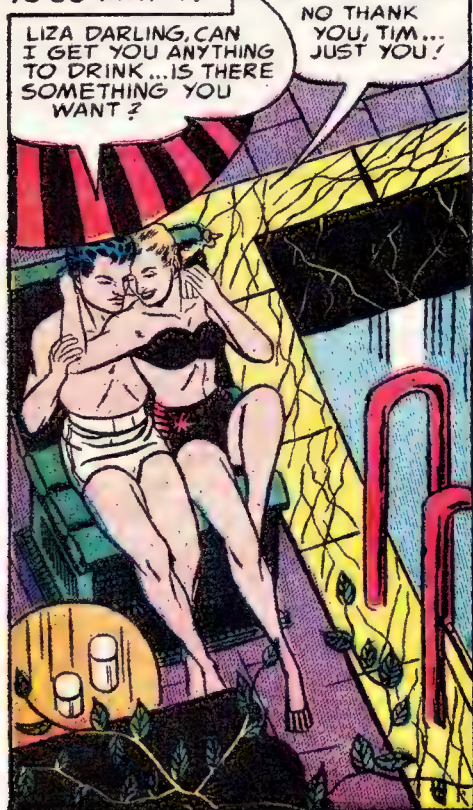
LIFE ON A FARM CAN BE DULL, BORING, WITHOUT EXCITEMENT! AT LEAST THAT'S HOW I FOUND IT! BUT A GIRL CAN DREAM, CAN'T SHE? AND THAT'S HOW I FOUND ALL THE THINGS I WAS MISSING... AND ENDED UP WITH A...

Paper Romance!

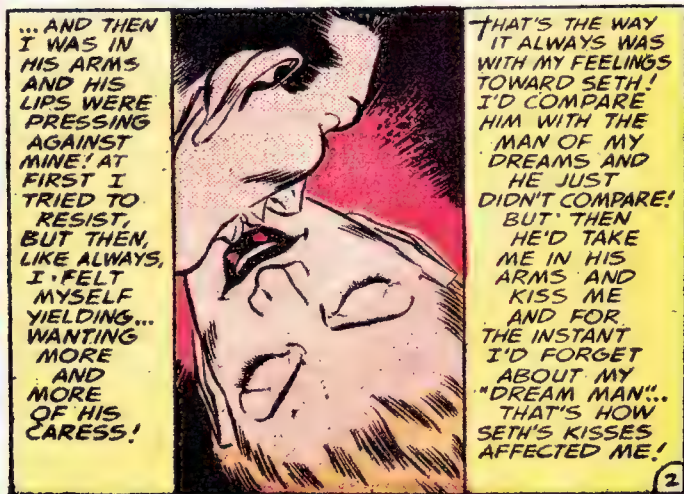
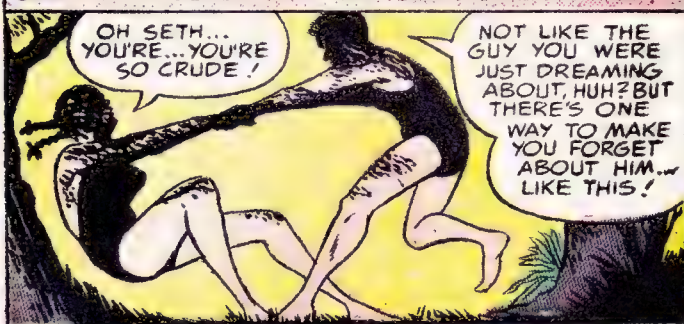




YES, MY MIND WAS ON SOMETHING ELSE... ON THE TYPE OF SWIMMING POOL I HAD ALWAYS ENVISIONED MYSELF IN... AND WITH THE TYPE OF MAN TO GO WITH IT!



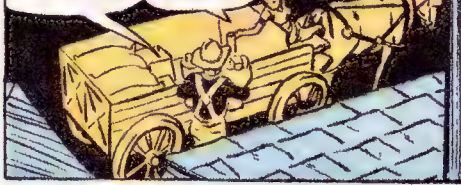
BUT MY REVERIE WAS SHORT-LIVED AS I WAS SUDDENLY YANKED OUT OF MY DREAM BY SETH... SETH, WHO SEEMED TO SENSE WHAT WAS GOING ON IN MY MIND!



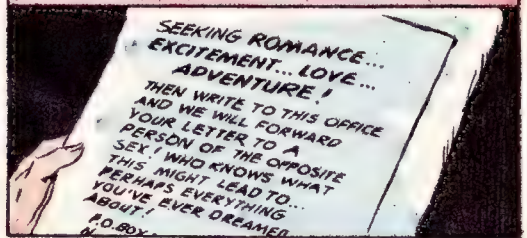
A FEW DAYS PASSED, DAYS FILLED WITH MY DREAMS AND OF IGNORING SETH! BUT IN OUR TINY COMMUNITY THAT WAS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE AND SO A FEW DAYS LATER IN TOWN I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO ACCEPT HIS OFFER OF A LIFT BACK TO THE FARM...

HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN QUITE A WHILE, LIZA... WHAT'S THE MATTER, BEEN BUSY WITH THAT DREAM MAN OF YOURS?

OH YOU JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND! NOW GIVE ME THAT PAPER SO I'LL HAVE SOMETHING TO DO ON THE WAY HOME... I DON'T WANT TO TALK TO YOU... YOU, YOU HICK!



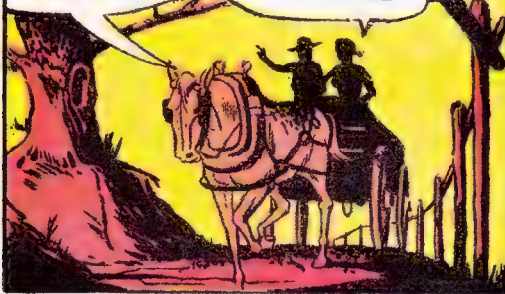
IT WAS OUT OF SPITE THAT I READ THE PAPER INSTEAD OF PAYING ATTENTION TO SETH! BUT WHO KNOWS, MAYBE IT WAS FATE! FOR IN THOSE PAGES I SAW MY ESCAPE FROM THE DULL, BORING LIFE I WAS DESTINED TO LEAD!



I DON'T KNOW WHY I BOTHERED TO TELL SETH ABOUT THE AD... PERHAPS OUT OF SPITE... BUT HE REACTED EXACTLY THE WAY I THOUGHT HE WOULD!

YOU'RE KIDDING! YOU DON'T REALLY THINK YOU CAN FIND YOUR "DREAM MAN" BY WRITING A LETTER TO SOME PHONY RACKET, DO YOU?

OF COURSE I CAN! AND TO PROVE TO YOU THAT I'M NOT KIDDING, I'LL EVEN LET YOU MAIL MY LETTERS... THAT SHOULD PROVE HOW MUCH I'M KIDDING!



IT WAS TOO LATE FOR ME TO BACK DOWN NOW! SO I WROTE THE LETTER AS SOON AS I GOT HOME! A LETTER THAT HAD BEEN IN MY MIND FOR YEARS... TELLING EVERYTHING ABOUT MYSELF AND HINTING AT WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR IN A MAN... THE REST WAS TO COME IF AND WHEN SOMEBODY ANSWERED MY LETTER!

THE NEXT FEW DAYS DRAGGED BY WITH LEADEN FEET AND AFTER A WHILE I FORGOT COMPLETELY ABOUT MY LETTER... WELL, NOT COMPLETELY! BUT THEN...

HEY LOOK WHAT I FOUND IN YOUR MAIL BOX... A LETTER FOR YOU... AND WITH A NEW YORK ADDRESS! MIRACLES, WILL THEY NEVER CEASE!

NEVER MIND YOUR WISE CRACKS, SMARTY... JUST GIVE ME MY LETTER! NOW WE'LL SEE WHO LIVES IN A DREAM WORLD!



EVEN THOUGH IT HURT, I WAITED UNTIL JUST BEFORE GOING TO SLEEP BEFORE READING THE LETTER... THIS WAS A SECRET THAT I WOULD SHARE WITH NO ONE!



TOM HAMILTON... AGE 29... ARCHITECT... AND HERE'S HIS PICTURE... TALL... DARK... HANDSOME... THIS IS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE!

I... CAN'T... BELIEVE... IT... I... MUST... STILL... BE... IN... MY... DREAM... WORLD... HE'S... EVERYTHING... I EVER... WANTED...

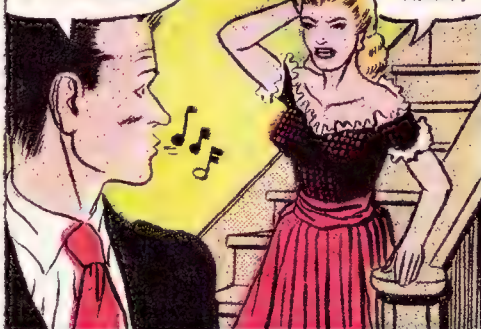


AFTER THAT
MY
CORRESPONDENCE
WITH TOM
HAMILTON
CONTINUED HOT
AND HEAVY,
AND EACH
LETTER FROM
HIM CONVINCED
ME EVEN
FURTHER THAT
THIS WAS
EXACTLY THE
MAN THAT I
HAD ENVISIONED
IN MY MIND!
AND OH, HOW
I LET SETH
KNOW IT...OF
COURSE HE
SAW ALL THE
MAIL THAT
PASSED BETWEEN
US, AND IF IT
BOOTHERED HIM
HE NEVER SAID
A WORD!

OF COURSE I DIDN'T COMPLETELY
IGNORE SETH...HOW COULD I? AND
ONE NIGHT HE ARRIVED TO TAKE ME
TO THE ANNUAL COUNTY DANCE...

WHAT HAPPENED
TO YOUR PIG TAILS,
LIZA? YOU...YOU
LOOK LIKE SOME-
THING OUT OF
A DREAM!

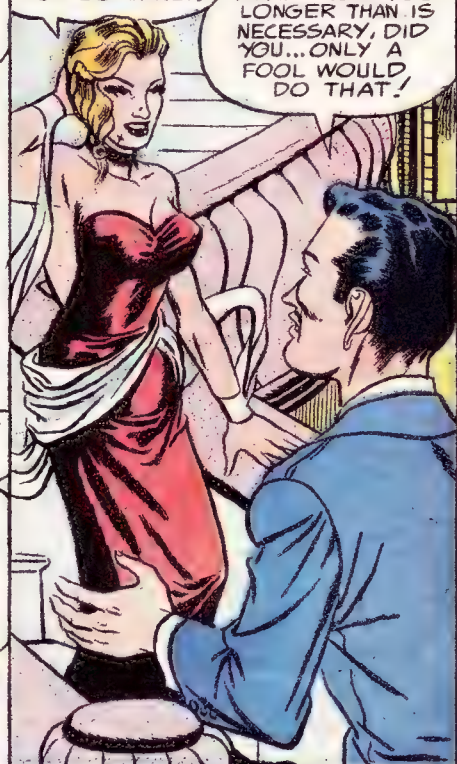
OH DON'T BE
RIDICULOUS, SETH...
JUST A LITTLE
SOMETHING I DID
WITH MY
HAIR!



SOMEHOW I DIDN'T EVEN SEEM
TO NOTICE SETH AT THE FOOT OF
THE STAIRS... IT WAS TOM HAMILTON
WHO WAS WAITING FOR ME!

WHY TOM, I
DIDN'T EXPECT
YOU SO EARLY!

YOU DIDN'T THINK
I COULD STAY
AWAY FROM YOU
LONGER THAN IS
NECESSARY, DID
YOU... ONLY A
FOOL WOULD
DO THAT!



BUT MY DREAM WAS
SHORT-LIVED...FOR
A COUNTY SQUARE
DANCE IS HARDLY
CONDSIVE TO THE
ROMANTIC ATMOSPHERE
I HAD BUILD UP...

OKAY LADIES
AND GENTS...
GRAB YOUR
PARTNERS
AND AWAY
WE'LL
GO!

HURRY UP HONEY!
THE FIRST DANCE
IS ABOUT TO
START!

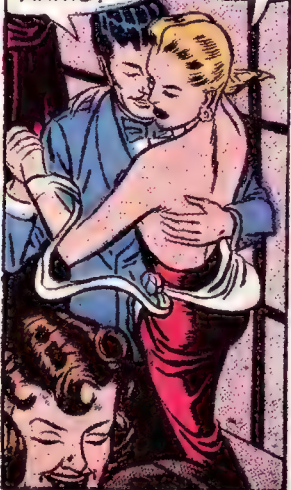
OH SETH,
AT LEAST YOU
COULD BE MORE
SOPHISTICATED
THAN THAT! WHY
DON'T YOU HAVE
SOME POLISH
ABOUT YOU?



...NOW
SWING
YOUR
PARTNERS
ROUND
ABOUT...
LADIES
IN AND
GENTS
OUT!
C'MON LIZA,
GET INTO
THE SWING
OF IT...
YOU ACT
BORED!
WELL, I
AM BORED!
THIS IS
SO... SO...
INFANTILE!

THAT WAS THE TROUBLE
WITH SETH...NO POLISH!
NOT LIKE TOM HAMILTON
ANYWAY...IT WOULDN'T
HAVE BEEN A COUNTRY
SQUARE DANCE WITH
HIM!

DANCING
WITH YOU
IS LIKE DANCING
WITH AN ANGEL!
I NEVER WANT
TO LET YOU
OUT OF MY
ARMS!
AND I NEVER
WANT TO
LEAVE
THEM...
HOLD
ME
TIGHT,
TOM!



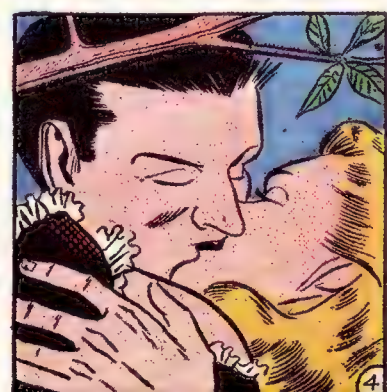
FINALLY CAME A BREAK IN THE DANCE AND
SETH TOOK ME OUTSIDE! IT WAS OBVIOUS
THAT HE HAD SOMETHING ON HIS MIND...
SOMETHING HE HAD TO TELL ME...

YES, SETH,
WHAT IS IT?

WELL, LIZA YOU KNOW HOW
I FEEL ABOUT YOU...OR YOU
SHOULD! WHAT I WANT TO
SAY...WHAT...I'M... TRYING...
TO... SAY... OH NUTS, I
CAN'T SAY IT! ALL I CAN
DO IS... THIS!



AND ONCE
AGAIN I
WAS IN SETH'S
ARMS,
YIELDING
TO HIS LIPS
AGAINST
MINE! ONCE
AGAIN I
TRIED TO
RESIST BUT
COULDN'T...
ONCE AGAIN
I WANTED
HIS KISSES...
MORE...
MORE...
MORE!



NOT A WORD WAS SAID WHEN SETH TOOK ME HOME! BUT THE WORDS WERE FORMING IN MY HEART... FOR WHEN HE HAD BEEN KISSING ME I HAD BEEN DREAMING THAT IT WAS TOM HAMILTON! IT HAD BEEN HIS ARMS ABOUT ME... HIS LIPS AGAINST MINE! IT WASN'T JUST A DREAM... I KNOW IT! THAT'S WHY I HAD TO WRITE HIM ANOTHER LETTER! A LETTER THAT I HAD BEEN WANTING TO WRITE FROM THE VERY BEGINNING OF OUR PAPER ROMANCE!

FOR THIS WAS A LETTER THAT HINTED OF MY LOVE FOR HIM! OH, I DIDN'T COME RIGHT OUT AND SAY SO... BUT HE WAS CLEVER ENOUGH TO READ BETWEEN THE LINES... THAT'S WHERE HE WOULD FIND MY LOVE...

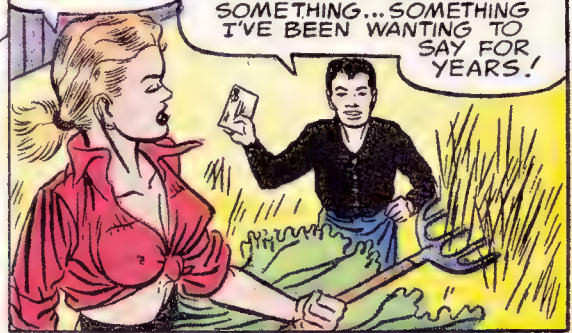
...AND... SO... WILL... CLOSE... NOW... DEAR... TOM... EAGERLY... AWAITING... YOUR... ANSWER... EVER YOURS... LIZA!



I WAITED WEEKS FOR HIS NEXT LETTER... AND THERE WERE TIMES WHEN I GAVE UP HOPING... PERHAPS I HAD BEEN TOO FORWARD... PERHAPS HE HAD ANOTHER GIRL! A THOUSAND POSSIBLE REASONS RAN THROUGH MY MIND... AND THEN CAME THAT DAY OF DAYS WHEN SETH BROUGHT ME THE ANSWER...

MY LETTER! YOU HAVE MY LETTER!

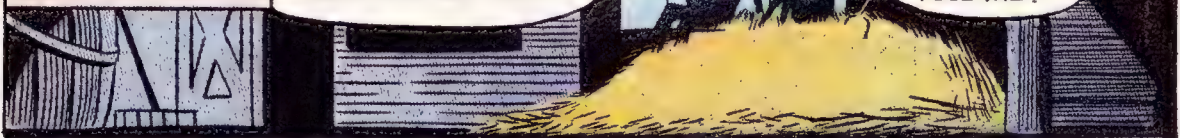
YES, LIZA... I THINK IT IS THE ONE YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR! BUT BEFORE YOU READ IT CAN I SAY SOMETHING... SOMETHING I'VE BEEN WANTING TO SAY FOR YEARS!



AND ONCE AGAIN SETH STARTED TO TELL ME WHAT WAS IN HIS HEART...

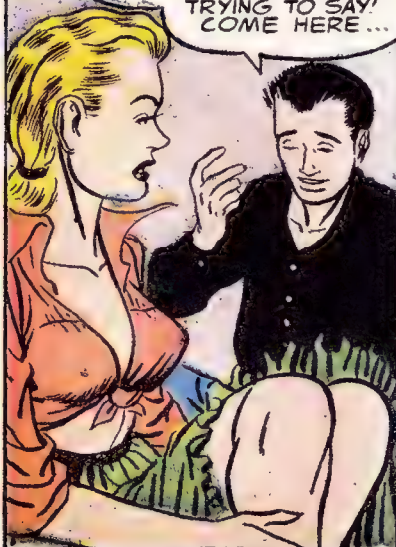
OH DARN IT... WHY IS IT I CAN'T GET THE WORDS OUT... I'VE BEEN RE-HEARSING ALL DAY!

GO AHEAD, SETH... WHAT IS IT YOU WANTED TO TELL ME?



I WAITED EAGERLY FOR HIM TO SAY THE WORDS... WORDS THAT I HAD BEEN LONGING TO HEAR... WANTING HIM TO SAY THEM AS I KNEW TOM HAMILTON COULD SAY THEM... WITH POLISH, FINESSE... ROMANCE... SAY THEM, SETH... SAY THEM!

PLEASE GO ON, SETH! WELL... IT'S ABOUT YOU AND ME... ABOUT US... WE'VE BEEN GOING TOGETHER FOR A LONG TIME AND I ALWAYS THOUGHT... I ALWAYS HOPED... I ALWAYS IMAGINED... OH YOU KNOW WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY! COME HERE...



AND THEN THE WORDS STOPPED... AND HIS KISSES WERE SPEAKING FOR HIM! KISSES OF DESIRE... OF LONGING... AND I YIELDED! OUR BODIES STRAINED AGAINST EACH OTHER AS THE FLAMES OF PASSION CONSUMED US! AND FOR THE MOMENT TOM HAMILTON WAS FORGOTTEN... BUT ONLY FOR THE MOMENT... FOR ONCE AGAIN IT WAS HE THAT WAS MAKING LOVE TO ME AND NOT SETH!



I TORE MYSELF OUT OF HIS EMBRACE AND RACED INTO THE HOUSE BEFORE HIS LOVE AND DESIRE CONSUMED ME! AND THEN I REMEMBERED THE LETTER ... TOM HAMILTON'S LETTER! THE ONE ANSWERING MINE!

HE'S COMING TO SEE ME... TOMORROW ON THE NOON TRAIN! HE'LL BE WEARING A WHITE CARNATION!



TOMORROW! TOMORROW! I'LL SEE HIM TOMORROW! THAT MEANS HE MUST LOVE ME! ELSE WHY WOULD HE COME ALL THE WAY OUT HERE JUST TO SEE ME... THAT'S THE ONLY REASON!

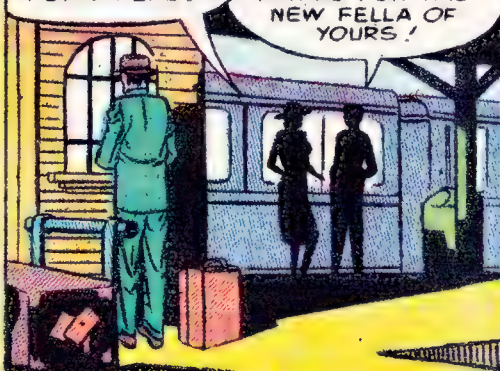


THERE WAS LITTLE SLEEP FOR ME THAT NIGHT... HOW COULD I SLEEP WHEN VISIONS OF A TALL, DARK HANDSOME STRANGER WEARING A WHITE CARNATION WERE SPINNING THROUGH MY MIND? A TALL, DARK HANDSOME STRANGER WHO LOVED ME... WHO SHOULD SWEEP ME OFF MY FEET AND MAKE MY WORLD OF DREAMS COME TRUE!

THE TIME PASSED SO SLOWLY THE NEXT DAY BUT FINALLY IT WAS NOON! I RACED TO THE STATION TO WAIT FOR THE TRAIN AND ALSO FOUND SETH THERE! I WAS GLAD OF THAT... FOR I WANTED HIM TO SEE A REAL MAN!

OH HELLO SETH, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

SAME THING YOU ARE, I GUESS... WAITING FOR THIS NEW FELLA OF YOURS!



FINALLY THE TRAIN ARRIVED! EAGERLY I WATCHED THE PASSENGERS GET OFF... AND MY HEART DROPPED... FOR THERE WAS NO TOM HAMILTON! IN DISTRESS I TURNED TO SETH!

OH SETH, HE DIDN'T SHOW UP... HE WAS... SETH! YOU'RE WEARING A WHITE CARNATION!

THAT'S RIGHT, HONEY. I'M SETH! YOU'RE TOM HAMILTON!



I OPENED THAT FIRST LETTER YOU WROTE AND RATHER THAN SEE YOU HURT BY SOME STRANGER I PRETENDED THAT I WAS TOM HAMILTON! I HAD A FRIEND IN NEW YORK MAIL THE LETTERS FOR ME!

BUT WHY, SETH... WHY? IF YOU CAN WRITE LETTERS LIKE THAT WHY COULDN'T YOU TELL ME THOSE THINGS? I ALWAYS IMAGINED YOU AS A HICK... BUT YOUR LETTERS SOUNDED JUST LIKE THE MAN I HAD ALWAYS DREAMED ABOUT!

AND THEN SUDDENLY I WAS IN HIS ARMS... WHERE I BELONGED!

I COULD ALWAYS WRITE THE THINGS I FELT... BUT I COULD NEVER SAY THEM TO YOU... EVEN THOUGH I FELT THEM! AND YOU KNOW HOW I FELT THEM!

YES SETH, I KNOW HOW YOU FELT THEM! FOR I FELT THEM TOO... ONLY I WAS TOO STUPID TO REALIZE... THE ONLY TIME I DID WAS WHEN YOU DID! THIS!



...AND THEN HE WAS IN MY ARMS... AND MY LIPS WERE AGAINST HIS... AND THAT'S WHERE THEY BELONGED!



THE END

...AND NOW I KNOW WHAT LOVE REALLY IS... IT'S SOMETHING YOU FEEL IN YOUR HEART, NOT ON PAPER!

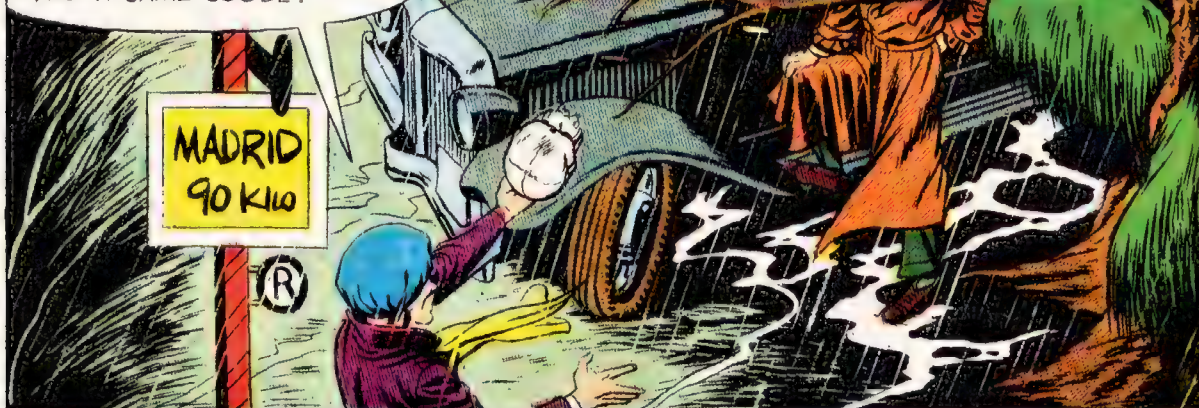
The gun poked through the curtain of time and fired across a million years to put ---

A HOLE IN HIS HEAD

AS MARTHA HARDY TOLD THE STORY, IT WAS CARL MORTON WHO FOUND THE SKULL JUST OFF A DIRT ROAD, SOME FORTY-FIVE MILES FROM THE CITY OF MADRID, SPAIN, ON A COLD, WET NIGHT IN FEBRUARY, 1934!

WHATEVER IT IS, IT CAN **WAIT!** I HAVE A LECTURE TO DELIVER AT THE INSTITUTE IN MADRID TOMORROW! REMEMBER? **AND WE'RE LOST!** HOW FAR DO WE STILL HAVE TO TRAVEL?

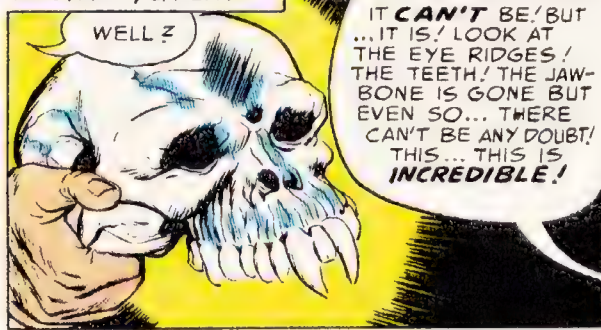
MR. PORTER! LOOK AT **THIS!** IT WAS STICKING UP OUT OF THE MUD... I HIT IT WITH MY TOE AND IT CAME LOOSE!



NINETY KILOMETERS, ACCORDING TO THE SIGNPOST! BUT... PORTER, I'VE BEEN WITH YOU LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW A FOSSIL WHEN I SEE ONE! LOOK! THIS THING IS **ANCIENT!**

YOU'RE A MAN OF **MANY** TALENTS, AREN'T YOU, CARL? LET ME SEE THAT...

JOHN PORTER WAS AN ANTHROPOLOGIST, CARL MORTON WAS HIS MANAGER... AND MARTHA HARDY WAS HIS SECRETARY... AS WELL AS HIS FIANCEE! ALL THREE WERE TIRED AND TENSE! EUROPEAN LECTURE TOURS ARE NOT EASY! THAT WAS TO BE IMPORTANT, LATER!



IT **CAN'T** BE, BUT... IT IS! LOOK AT THE EYE RIDGES! THE TEETH! THE JAW-BONE IS GONE BUT EVEN SO... THERE CAN'T BE ANY DOUBT! THIS... THIS IS **INCREDIBLE!**

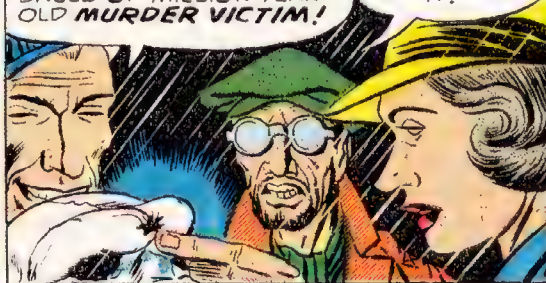
I'D STAKE MY REPUTATION THAT THIS IS THE SKULL OF A NEANDERTHAL MAN! HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS, PERHAPS MILLIONS OF YEARS OLD! BUT... SUCH THINGS JUST AREN'T FOUND THIS WAY!

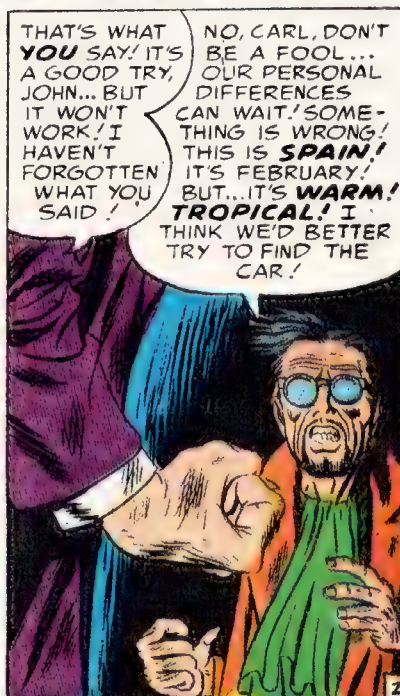
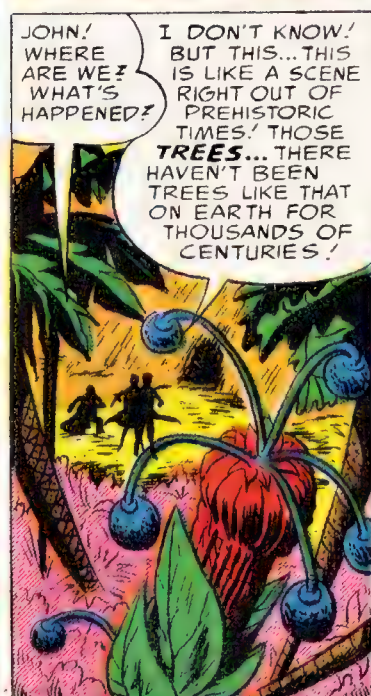
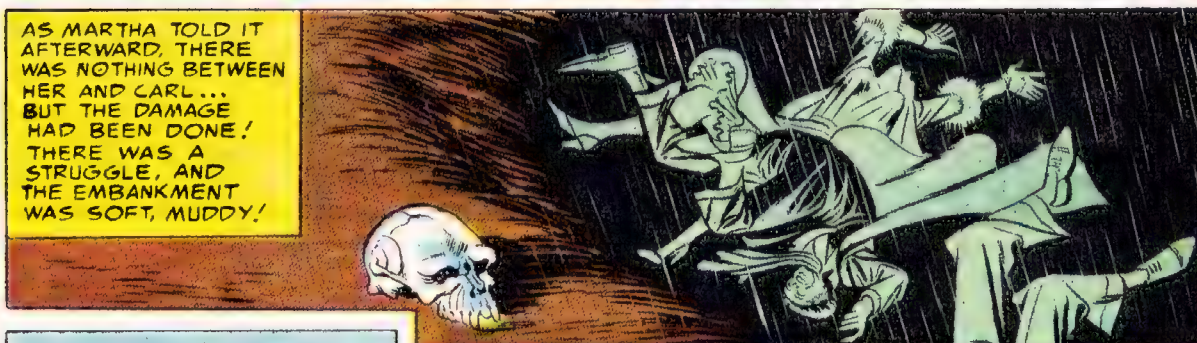
THIS ONE WAS! THE RAIN MUST HAVE WASHED AWAY THE EARTH AROUND IT! I'LL BET THAT OLD BOY NEVER FIGURED HE'D BE PICKED UP BY SOMEONE LIKE ME WHEN HE CONKED OUT!



THERE'S WHAT PROBABLY KILLED HIM! THAT HOLE! RIGHT BETWEEN THE EYES! WHAT A BREAK! I CAN JUST SEE THE HEADLINES! ANTHROPOLOGIST FINDS SKULL OF MILLION YEAR OLD **MURDER VICTIM!**

YOUR INTEREST IN MY CAREER TOUCHES ME, CARL... BUT LET'S NOT **OVERDO** IT!





THERE HAD TO BE AN EXPLANATION... OF COURSE... BUT IT WAS NOT TO BE FOUND AT THE TOP OF THE SLOPE!

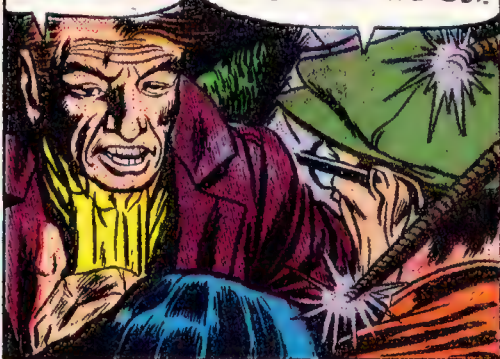
GONE! THE ROAD, THE CAR... EVEN THE SKULL! THEY'RE GONE! JOHN, WHAT DOES IT MEAN? IT... IT'S LIKE A DREAM! A NIGHTMARE! **AS IF WE'D GONE BACK IN TIME!**

PERHAPS WE HAVE! MY MIND SAYS IT'S IMPOSSIBLE, BUT WE CAN'T ALL BE HAVING THE SAME HALLUCINATIONS...



BACK IN TIME, MY EYE! I DON'T GET IT EITHER... BUT I SAY LET'S START WALKING! THERE MUST BE **SOME** WAY OUT OF THIS PLACE!

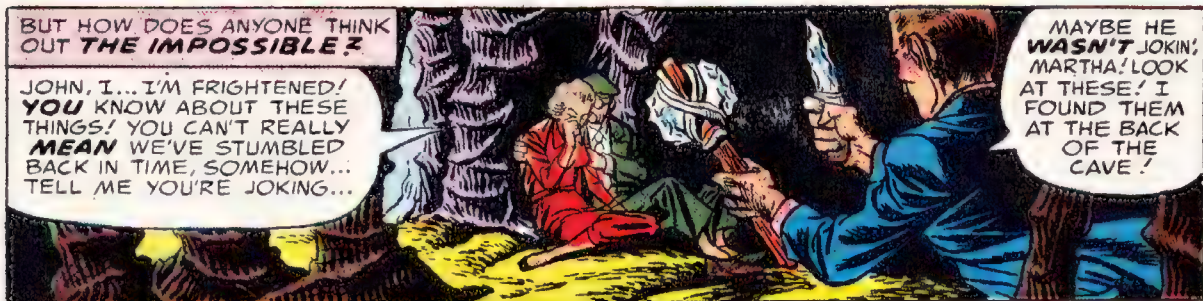
NO! WE'LL BE SAFER IF WE CAN WAIT FOR DAYLIGHT... THERE WAS AN OPENING AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EMBANKMENT... MAYBE A CAVE! WE CAN SPEND THE NIGHT IN THERE... WE'VE GOT TO THINK THIS OUT!



BUT HOW DOES ANYONE THINK OUT **THE IMPOSSIBLE?**

JOHN, I... I'M FRIGHTENED! YOU KNOW ABOUT THESE THINGS! YOU CAN'T REALLY MEAN WE'VE STUMBLED BACK IN TIME, SOMEHOW... TELL ME YOU'RE JOKING...

MAYBE HE WASN'T JOKIN', MARTHA! LOOK AT THESE! I FOUND THEM AT THE BACK OF THE CAVE!



FLINT! A FLINT KNIFE... AND AN AXE! CARL! DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS? THESE ARE **STONE AGE** WEAPONS!

I KNOW! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE... **NOW!** IF THERE'S A WAY BACK, WE'D BETTER FIND IT... **FAST..**

CARL MORTON STUMBLED FROM THE CAVE, AND THE OTHERS FOLLOWED... AND...

YA-AAA

JOHN... JOHN... THAT'S **CARL!**



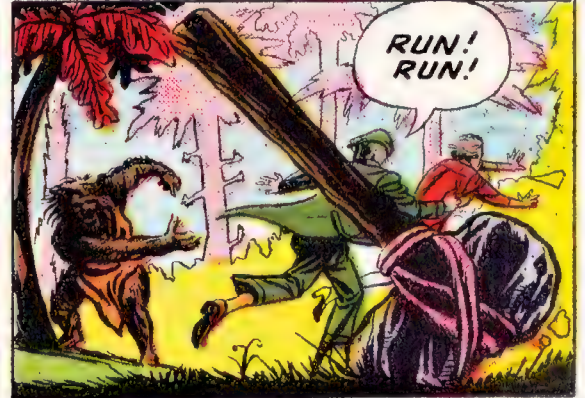
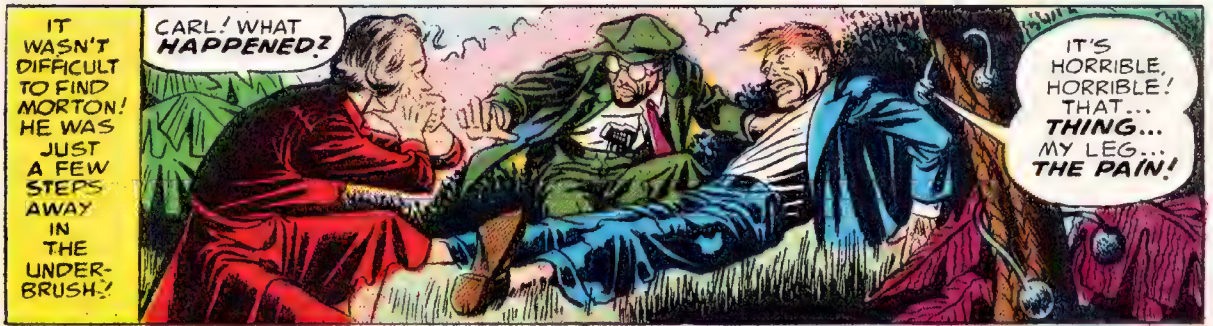
AND IN PAIN... HORRIBLE **PAIN!** COME ON...

A GUN! JOHN, YOU... HAVE A **GUN!**

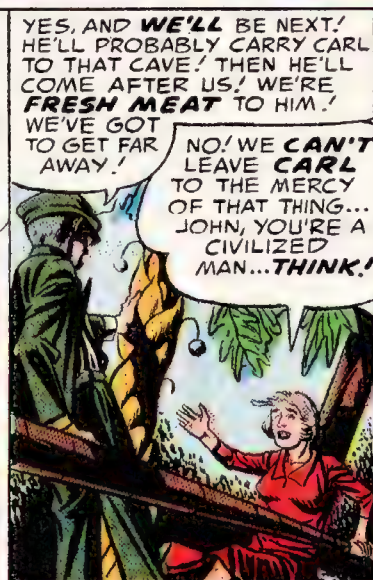
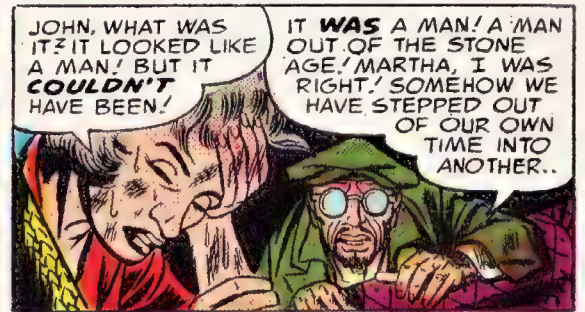


I WAS GOING TO USE IT ON CARL! I'VE HAD IT FOR WEEKS! I'VE BEEN HALF OUT OF MY MIND WITH JEALOUSY! BUT THAT DOESN'T SEEM IMPORTANT NOW... SOMEHOW! **WE'VE GOT TO FIND HIM!**

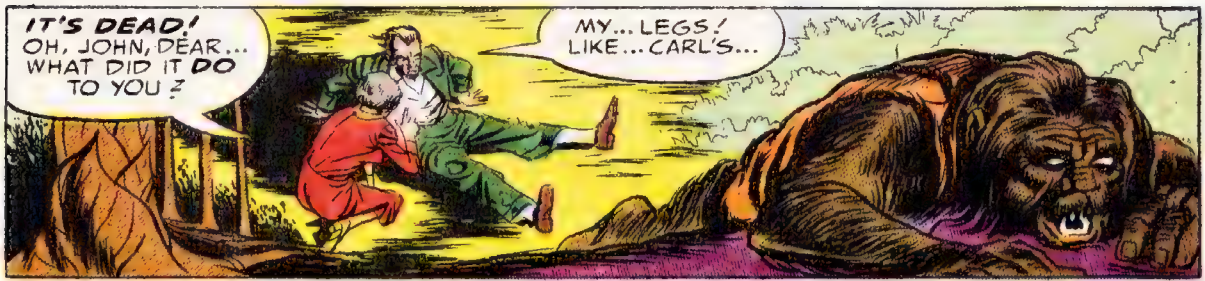




THERE WAS NO PURSUIT... BUT MARTHA HARDY AND JOHN PORTER RAN ON THE WINGS OF TERROR... UNTIL THE BREATH OF FIRE WAS IN THEIR LUNGS! UNTIL THEY COULD RUN NO MORE!







BUT... I **SHOT** IT... RIGHT BE-
TWEEN THE EYES! I KILLED
IT! NOW WE KNOW. DON'T WE
MARTHA? **AT LEAST WE
WON'T DIE WONDERING!**



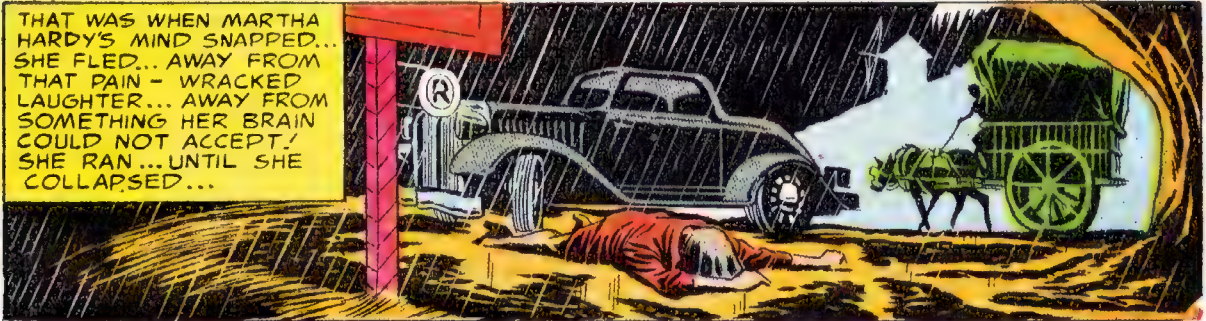
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND,
MARTHA? THAT LITTLE ROUND
HOLE IN THE SKULL... CARL
FOUND! NOW WE KNOW WHAT
MADE IT... I **DID**... WITH
A BULLET... **A MILLION
YEARS AGO...**



**A MILLION
YEARS AGO!**



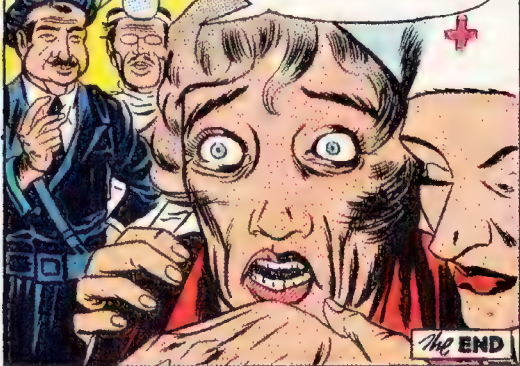
THAT WAS WHEN MARTHA
HARDY'S MIND SNAPPED...
SHE FLED... AWAY FROM
THAT PAIN - WRACKED
LAUGHTER... AWAY FROM
SOMETHING HER BRAIN
COULD NOT ACCEPT!
SHE RAN... UNTIL SHE
COLLAPSED...



A FARMER FOUND HER, BUT IT WAS WEEKS
BEFORE SHE COULD TELL HER STORY...

WELL, DOCTOR, AS YOU KNOW, WE BELIEVE
THAT SHE **MURDERED** HER TWO
COMPANIONS... HOW ELSE
COULD TWO MEN JUST
VANISH? BUT THE
DECISION IS YOURS!
SHE IS SANE... NO?

I'M
AFRAID NOT!
CAPTAIN, YOU
HEARD HER STORY...
A PITY, BUT SHE
IS QUITE MAD!



DON'T LET UGLY PIMPLES RUIN YOUR LOOKS

Don't neglect an externally caused pimply broken out skin that nobody loves to touch! Apply wonderfully medicated Poslam Ointment tonight—check results next morning after just one application!

Poslam contains all 9 ingredients well known to skin specialists—works faster, more effectively to help you to a finer complexion. Apply it after washing skin with non-alkali Poslam Soap. At druggists everywhere—costs so little.

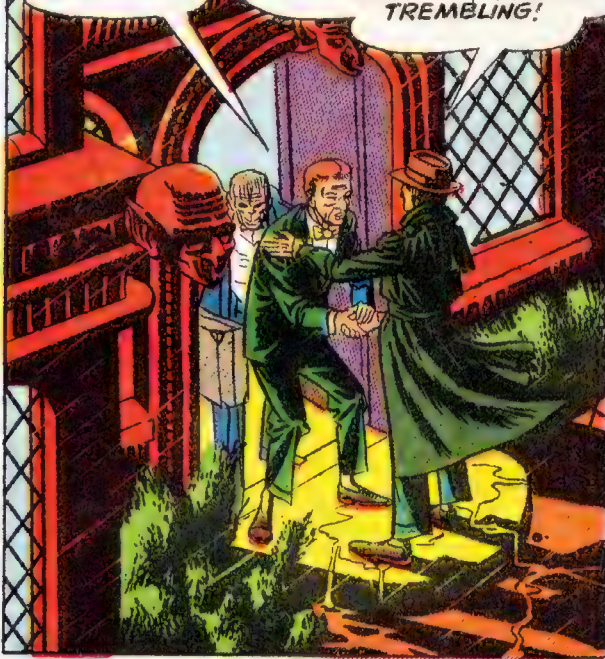
What man has not had the nightmare? The dream of waking within the narrow blackness of a coffin, of screaming with the sudden mind shattering knowledge that he has been---

BURIED ALIVE!

"TUESDAY: I MUST SET IT ALL DOWN, SITTING HERE WITH THE RAIN TAPPING SKELETON FINGERS ON MY WINDOW, I KNOW I MUST! THIS PLACE IS STRANGE. I FELT IT TONIGHT WHEN I FIRST SAW CARL HEATH AGAIN AFTER SIX YEARS.

SO YOU CAME, ABEL! I'M GRATEFUL!

YOU WROTE THAT YOU WERE IN TROUBLE. CARL, YOU'VE CHANGED! WHY, YOU'RE TREMBLING!



ABEL, I'VE LEARNED SOMETHING SINCE WE WERE AT THE UNIVERSITY TOGETHER... I'VE LEARNED... TO BE AFRAID!



"A SERVANT, ANCIENT AS THE REMEMBRANCE OF LONG AGO, TOOK MY BAGS--AND THE WIND SEEMED TO MOAN A SIGH OF FOREBODING AS I FOLLOWED CARL TO A SHADY SITTING ROOM ...

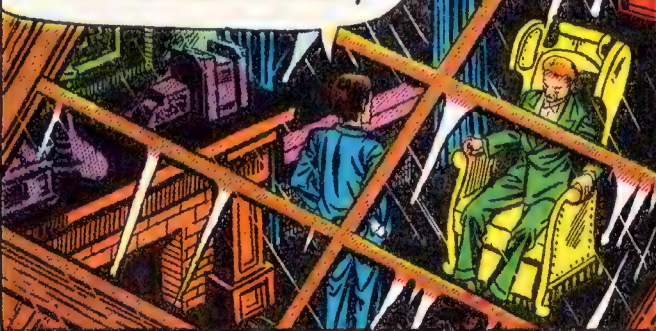
YOU'VE NEVER MET MY SISTER, HAVE YOU, ABEL --THOUGH YOU'VE HEARD ME SPEAK ABOUT HER. ANGELA, THIS IS ABEL BARTON!



SHE WAS -- HOW SHALL I SAY IT,-- PALE WHITE -- THE GHOST OF AN ORCHID ROOTED IN DECAY, SHE SMILED AND WENT OUT. CARL AND I WERE ALONE.

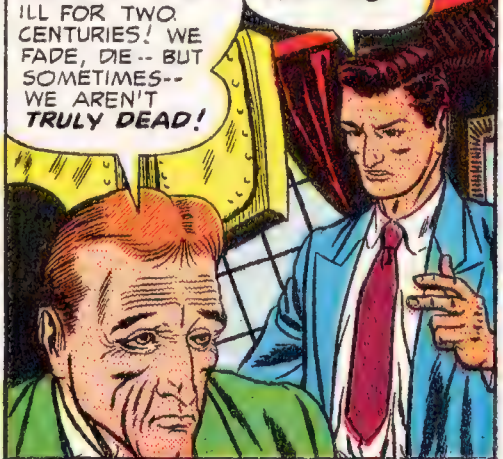
CARL, IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN! IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME, BUT YOU AND YOUR SISTER BOTH SEEM ILL -- AND YOU SPOKE OF BEING AFRAID -- AFRAID OF WHAT?

OF-- DESTINY, MY FRIEND...




ANGELA AND I ARE ILL, AS MY FAMILY HAS BEEN ILL FOR TWO CENTURIES! WE FADE, DIE -- BUT SOMETIMES-- WE AREN'T TRULY DEAD!

CARL, YOU'RE TALKING RIDDLES



NO, ABEL, THERE HAVE BEEN MEMBERS OF MY FAMILY WHO WERE BURIED... **BEFORE THEY WERE DEAD!** THEY WERE PLACED INTO THEIR TOMB... **ALIVE!**



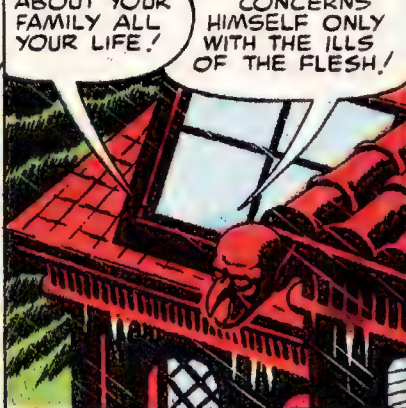
YOU TOLD ME THAT YEARS AGO! WHAT OF IT? I'VE HEARD OF SUCH CASES... EPILEPSY SOMETIMES GIVES THE **APPEARANCE OF DEATH!**

NOT EPILEPSY! THE MEDICAL WORLD HAS NO NAME FOR OUR MALADY! IT HAS NO CAUSE... NO CURE! THAT'S WHY I'M AFRAID... WHY I ASKED YOU TO COME!



BUT SURELY **YOUR DOCTOR** KNOWS IF YOU'RE NEAR DEATH! CARL, WHY THIS SUDDEN PANIC? YOU'VE KNOWN ABOUT YOUR FAMILY ALL YOUR LIFE!

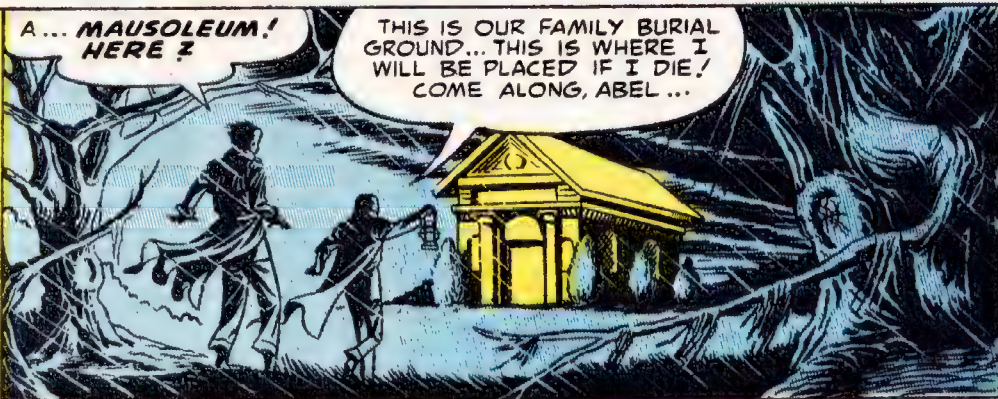
I KNEW... BUT SOMETIMES FEAR GROWS SLOWLY... MY DOCTOR IS A MAN OF COLD SCIENCE... HE CONCERNS HIMSELF ONLY WITH THE ILLS OF THE FLESH!



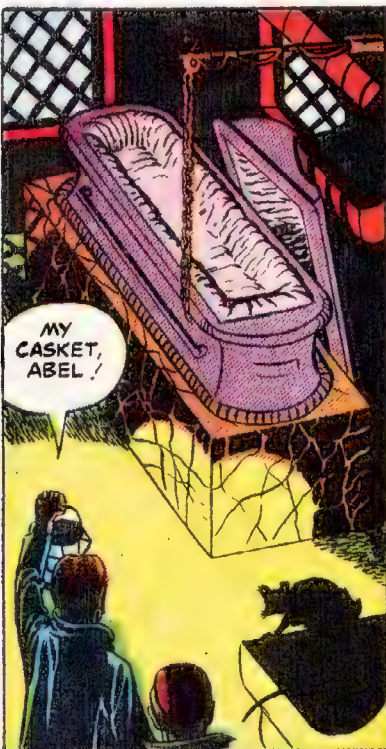
CARL WAS IN A BAD WAY INDEED... HE BECKONED TO ME AND I FOLLOWED HIM OUT OF THE HOUSE, THROUGH A DARK GROVE INTO THE DARKNESS OF THE FIELDS BEYOND...

A... **MAUSOLEUM!** HERE?

THIS IS OUR FAMILY BURIAL GROUND... THIS IS WHERE I WILL BE PLACED IF I DIE! COME ALONG, ABEL...



MY CASKET, ABEL!



I SAW A FEW LINKS OF CHAIN AND A METAL RING IN A COFFIN OF BRONZE! THAT... AND CARL'S EYES, BLAZING LIKE COALS IN THE DARKNESS...

THAT CHAIN LEADS TO THE HOUSE TO MY ROOM... TO AN ALARM... A BELL TO MY BEDSIDE! NOW DO YOU UNDERSTAND...

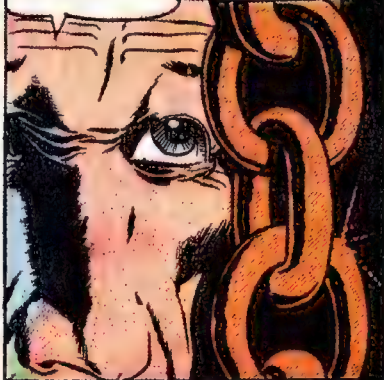


IF I SEEM TO BE DEAD I WILL BE BURIED HERE! BUT IF I STILL LIVE... **IF I WAKEN**, I CAN **SIGNAL** BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE! BUT SOMEONE MUST BE IN MY ROOM! **THE SIGNAL MUST BE HEARD!**

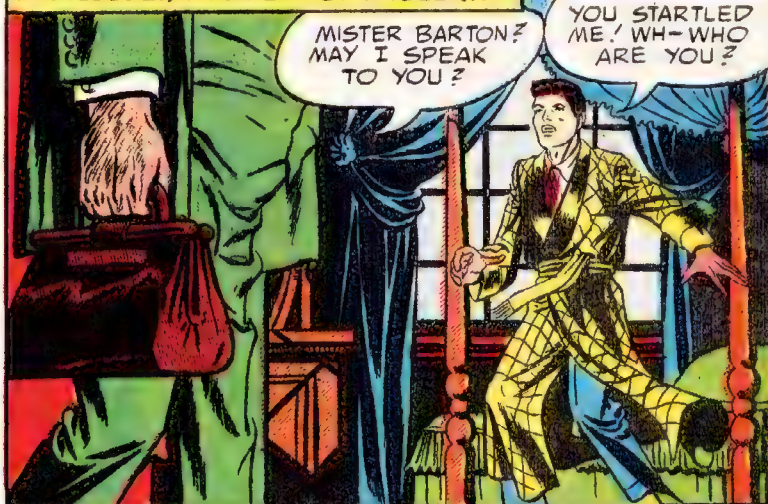
SO YOU'VE CHOSEN ME! WHY, EVEN IF ALL THIS **SHOULD** HAPPEN... **ANGELA** WOULD HEAR...



I HAVE TO SPARE HER THAT SHOCK IF I CAN! SHE'S WEAK, ABEL, THERE'S DEATH IN MY HOUSE! I FEEL IT! **STAY UNTIL I DIE!** THEN STAY ON... **A WEEK!** THAT'S ALL I ASK! STAY ON IN MY ROOM! LIVE IN IT... AFTER I DIE!



'WE WERE FRIENDS, I AGREED.' BUT AFTERWARDS, EVEN IN THAT GREAT GRAVE OF A HOUSE, IT SEEMED INSANE! I PACED RESTLESSLY, IMPATIENT OF MYSELF...



MISTER BARTON?
MAY I SPEAK
TO YOU?

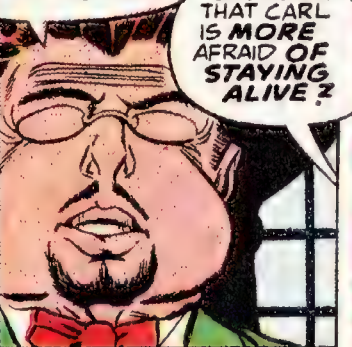
YOU STARTLED
ME! WH-WHO
ARE YOU?

I AM DOCTOR EVERETT! I STOP BY EVERY NIGHT! CARL HAS TOLD ME YOU'RE STAYING HERE! **MOST MEN WOULD RUN FROM CARL HEATH!**



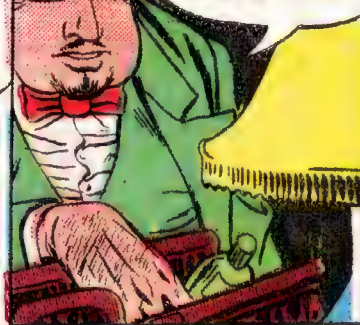
THEN YOU KNOW ABOUT THE CHAIN... COFFIN... DOCTOR, WHAT DOES IT ALL **MEAN?**

CARL IS SUFFERING FROM A DELUSION, MR. BARTON... HE IS NO CLOSER TO DEATH THAN YOU ARE! BUT, HE'S BROODED OVER HIS FAMILY HISTORY FOR SO LONG THAT HE **REALLY BELIEVES** HE MAY DIE AT ANY MOMENT!



CAN IT BE, DOCTOR, THAT CARL IS **MORE AFRAID OF STAYING ALIVE?**

I KNOW THERE HAVE BEEN CASES OF PREMATURE BURIAL IN HIS FAMILY... BUT HE IS PERFECTLY HEALTHY! HIS FIRST CONCERN SHOULD BE **ANGELA!** HIS FEARS HAVE INFECTED **HER, TOO!**



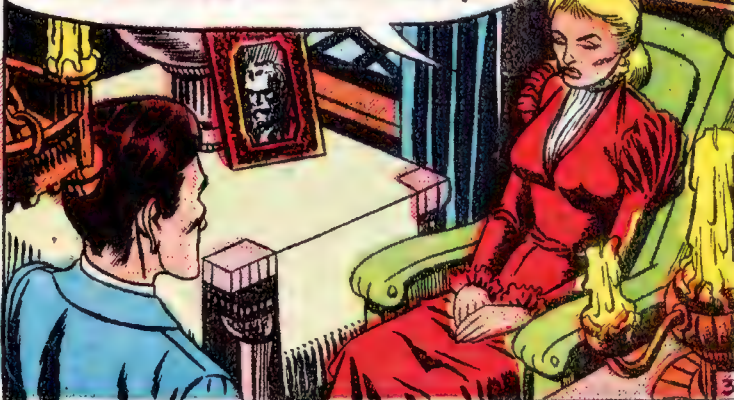
'WEDNESDAY' CARL REFUSED THE PILLS, HE SAYS HE HAS NO DESIRE FOR SLEEP, AND TONIGHT I REALIZED THAT THERE IS LITTLE I CAN DO FOR ANGELA!

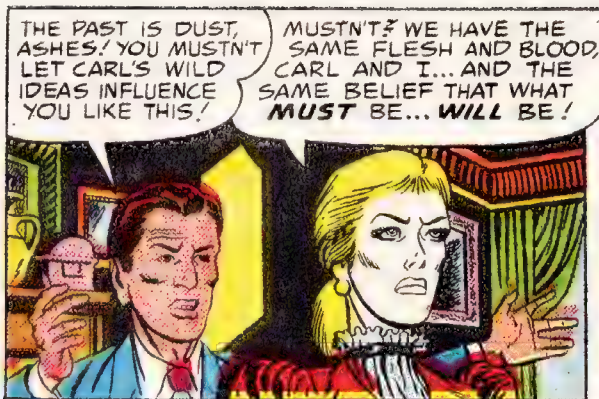
CARL NEEDS REST, BUT HE REFUSES MEDICATION! THESE ARE SLEEPING PILLS! TRY TO GET HIM TO TAKE ONE... AND TALK TO ANGELA... **SPEND AS MUCH TIME AS YOU CAN WITH HER!**



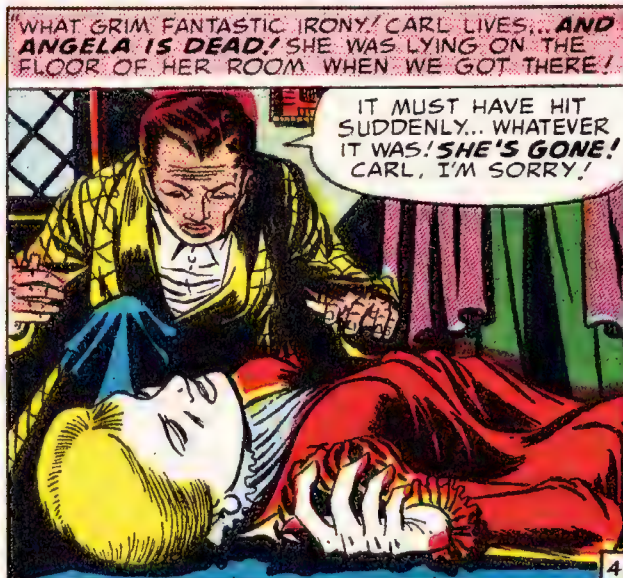
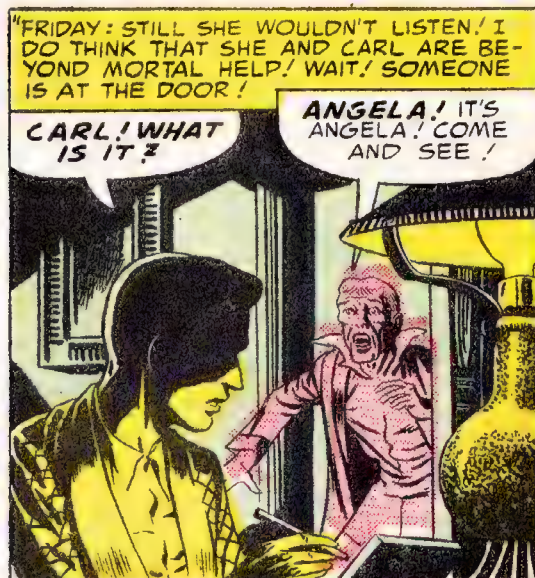
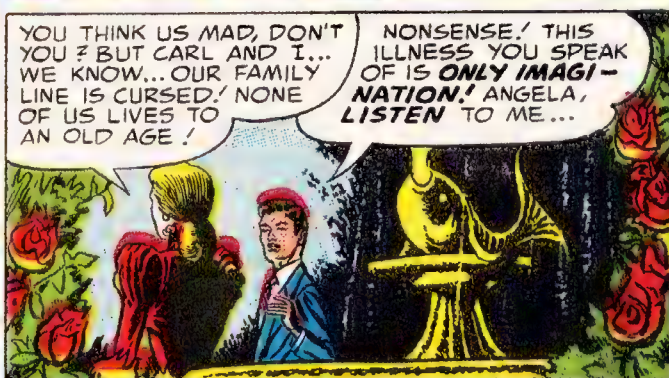
I'LL DO MY BEST...

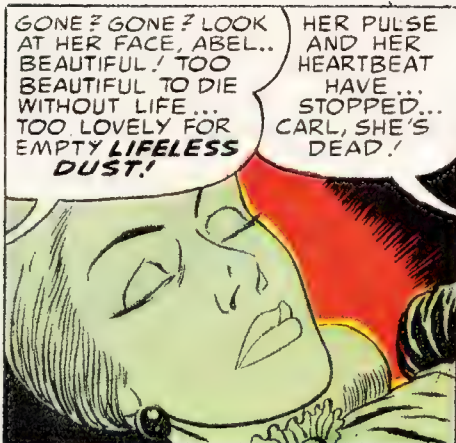
LEAVE HERE? BUT THIS IS **MY HOME!** MY **BROTHER** IS HERE... AND HE WILL NEVER LEAVE! NO, ABEL... WE BELONG HERE... **CLOSE TO THE PAST!**



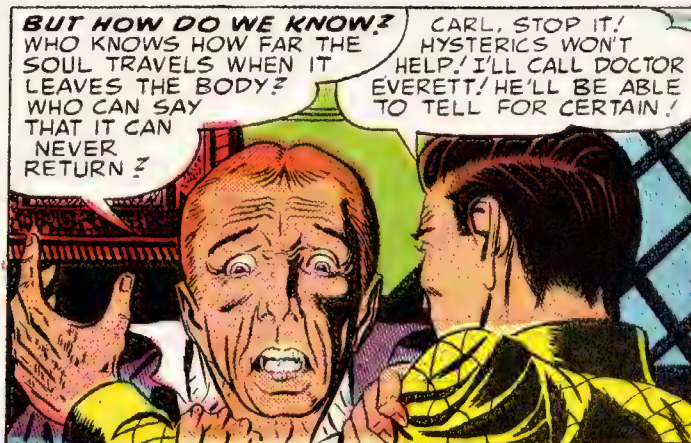


"THURSDAY: ANGELA IS BEYOND REACH! I HAVEN'T SEEN CARL TODAY! HE KEEPS TO HIS ROOM! BUT TONIGHT I TRIED AGAIN TO CONVINCE ANGELA... IT'S HOPELESS...





HER PULSE AND HER HEARTBEAT HAVE... STOPPED... CARL, SHE'S DEAD!



"LATER... THE DOCTOR WAS HERE! HE MADE EVERY TEST! BUT CARL STILL WILL NOT BELIEVE! HE TOOK ME TO THE MAUSOLEUM AGAIN!"

HERE... SHE MUST BE PLACED HERE, IN THE CASKET I PREPARED FOR MYSELF! NOWHERE ELSE! IF SHE STILL LIVES, I'LL KNOW!

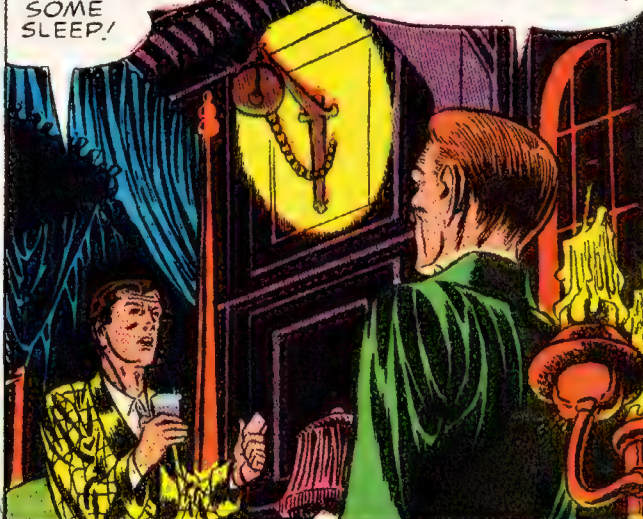
OF COURSE, CARL... IF YOU WANT IT LIKE THAT... OF COURSE!



"SATURDAY: ANGELA WAS PLACED IN THE BRONZE CASKET TODAY! POOR ANGELA! BUT NOW IT IS **CARL** WHO WORRIES ME!"

CARL, YOU MUST GO TO BED! YOU NEED REST! TRY TO GET SOME SLEEP!

NO! I MUST STAY AWAKE! THAT BELL... IF IT RINGS, THERE WILL BE TIME... TIME TO TAKE HER FROM THE CASKET!



"SUNDAY: MY BEDROOM WINDOW LOOKS ACROSS A COURT INTO CARL'S WINDOW! I SAW HIM PACING ALL LAST NIGHT!"

CARL... YOU'VE GOT TO REST! YOU'VE GOT TO SLEEP!



"MONDAY: FINALLY CARL SLEPT... LAST NIGHT... ALL NIGHT... GOOD! I'M GOING TO HIS ROOM, TO WAKEN HIM!"

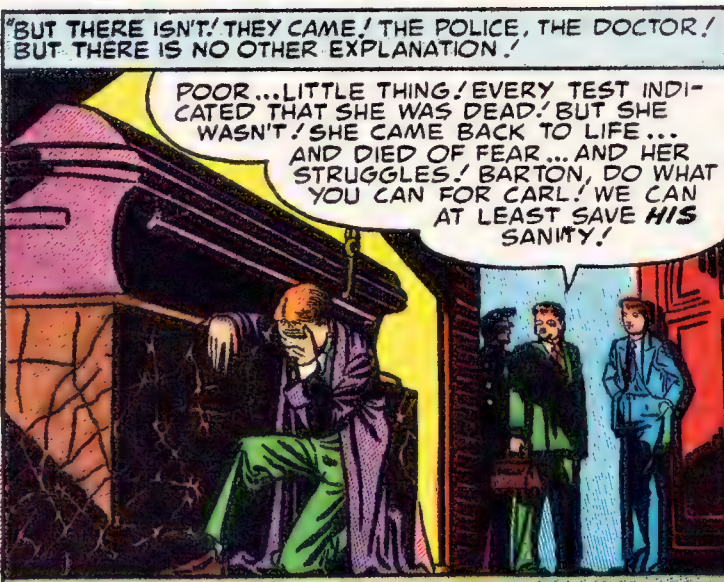
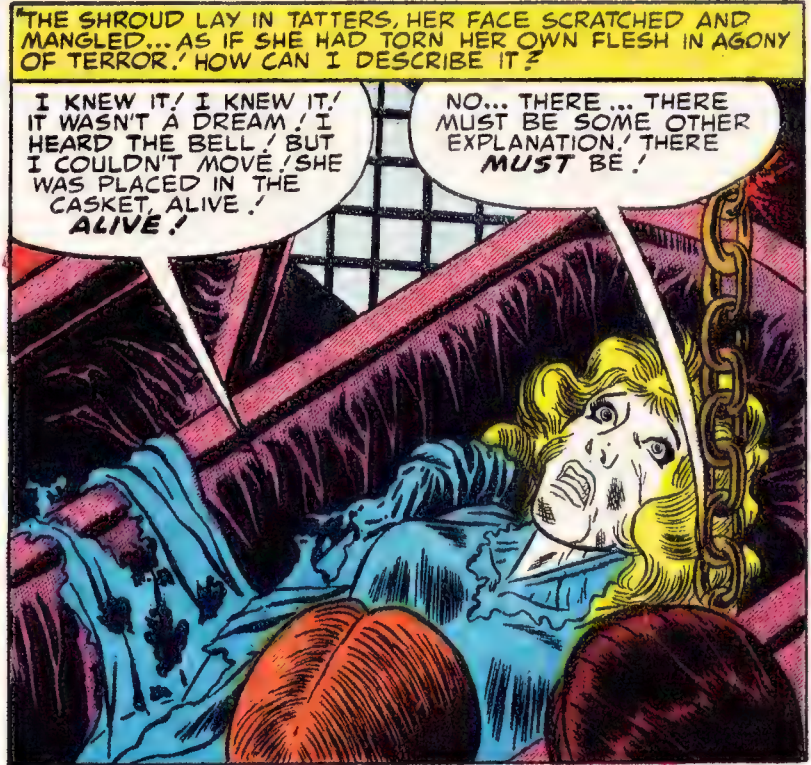
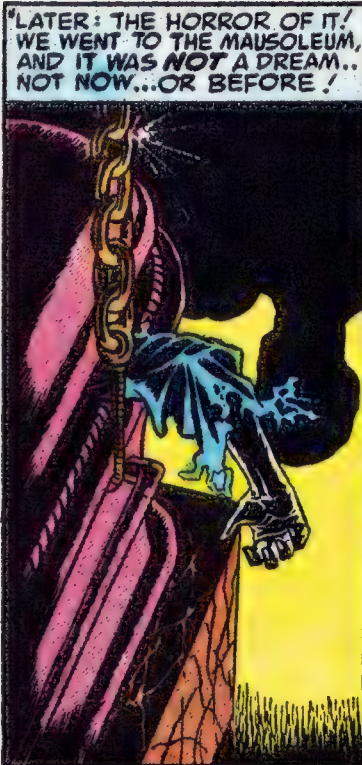
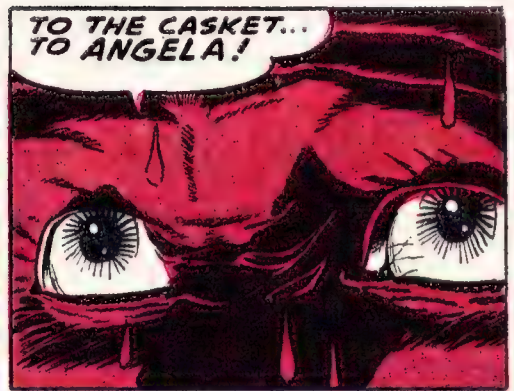
CARL... CARL, WAKE UP... IT'S MORNING!

MORNING... ABEL, I... I SLEPT... BUT... I **DREAMED!**



IT WAS HORRIBLE! I DREAMED THAT ANGELA STILL LIVED! I **HEARD THE BELL AND I TRIED TO MOVE! BUT I COULDN'T!** IT WAS AS IF THERE WERE GREAT WEIGHTS... PRESSING ME DOWN!



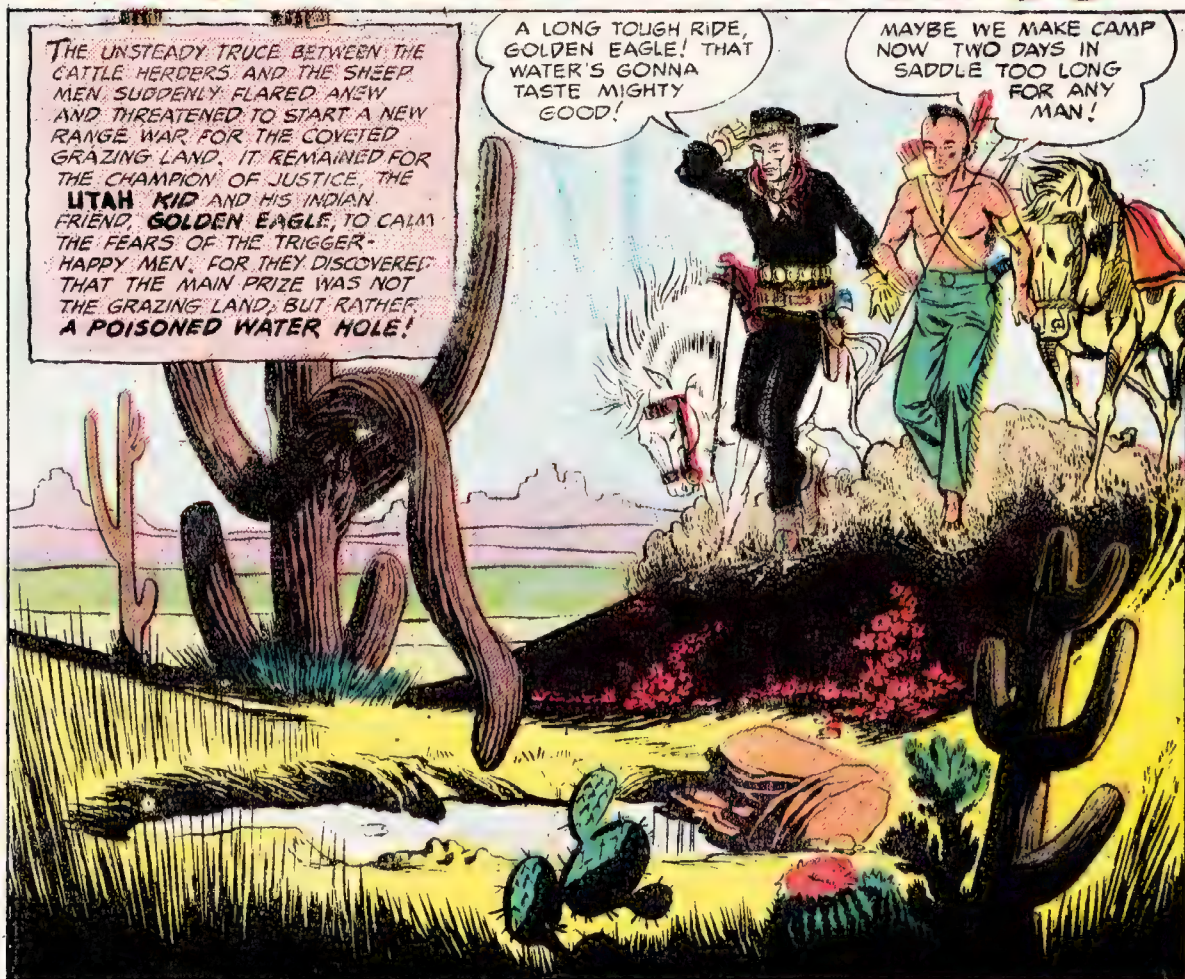


RANGE WAR!

THE UNSTEADY TRUCE BETWEEN THE CATTLE HERDERS AND THE SHEEP MEN SUDDENLY FLARED AWAY AND THREATENED TO START A NEW RANGE WAR FOR THE COVETED GRAZING LAND. IT REMAINED FOR THE CHAMPION OF JUSTICE, THE **UTAH KID** AND HIS INDIAN FRIEND, **GOLDEN EAGLE**, TO CALM THE FEARS OF THE TRIGGER-HAPPY MEN. FOR THEY DISCOVERED THAT THE MAIN PRIZE WAS NOT THE GRAZING LAND, BUT RATHER, A **POISONED WATER HOLE!**

A LONG TOUGH RIDE, **GOLDEN EAGLE!** THAT WATER'S GONNA TASTE MIGHTY GOOD!

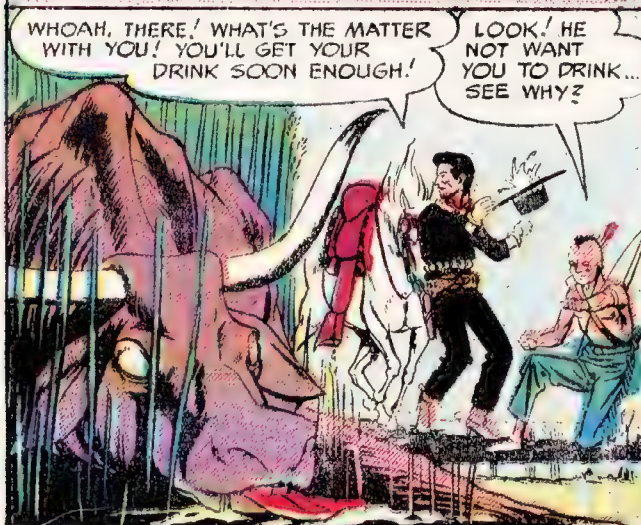
MAYBE WE MAKE CAMP NOW TWO DAYS IN SADDLE TOO LONG FOR ANY MAN!



EAGERLY THE LAW MAN WENT TO THE WATER HOLE, BUT GETTING A DRINK WAS ANOTHER PROBLEM...

WHOA, THERE! WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU! YOU'LL GET YOUR DRINK SOON ENOUGH!

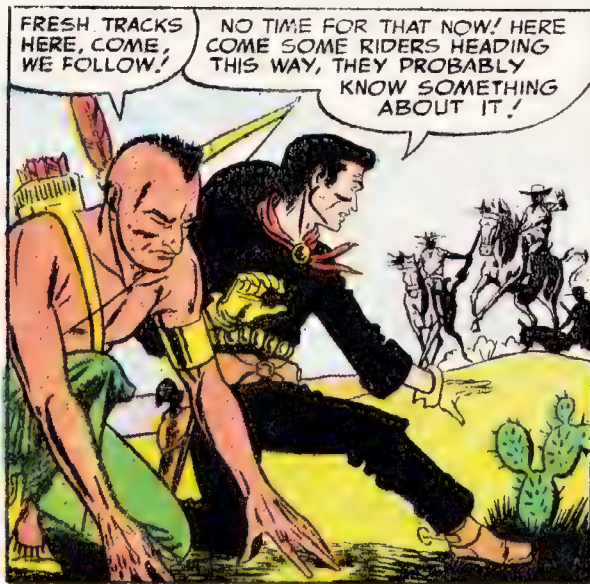
LOOK! HE NOT WANT YOU TO DRINK... SEE WHY?



IS DEAD STEER WITH FUNNY SMELL AT MOUTH!

AND I KNOW WHY, THIS WATER HOLE'S BEEN **POISONED!** WONDER WHAT ORNNY CUSS WOULD DO A THING LIKE THAT!





FRESH TRACKS
HERE, COME,
WE FOLLOW!

NO TIME FOR THAT NOW! HERE
COME SOME RIDERS HEADING
THIS WAY, THEY PROBABLY
KNOW SOMETHING
ABOUT IT!

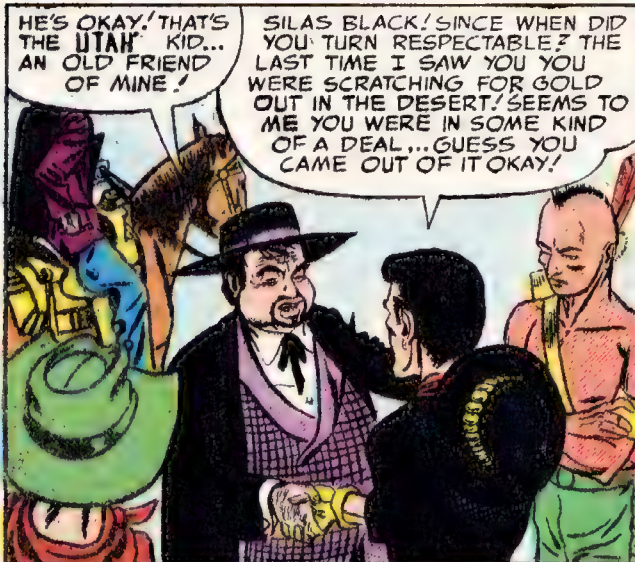
BUT THE RIDERS DIDN'T HAVE THE EXPLANATION
OF THE POISONED WATER HOLE! RATHER, THEY
WERE LOOKING FOR ONE THEMSELVES!



KEEP YOUR
HANDS AWAY
FROM YOUR
IRONS,
STRANGER!
ONE MOVE
AND IT'S
YOUR
LAST!

LOOKS
LIKE WE
CAUGHT
THE
CRITTERS
REDHANDED
THIS TIME!

DON'T LET THOSE
TRIGGER FINGERS GET
TOO ITCHY, GENTS...
YOU'RE BARKING UP
THE WRONG TREE!



HE'S OKAY! THAT'S
THE UTAH KID...
AN OLD FRIEND
OF MINE!

SILAS BLACK! SINCE WHEN DID
YOU TURN RESPECTABLE? THE
LAST TIME I SAW YOU YOU
WERE SCRATCHING FOR GOLD
OUT IN THE DESERT! SEEMS TO
ME YOU WERE IN SOME KIND
OF A DEAL... GUESS YOU
CAME OUT OF IT OKAY!



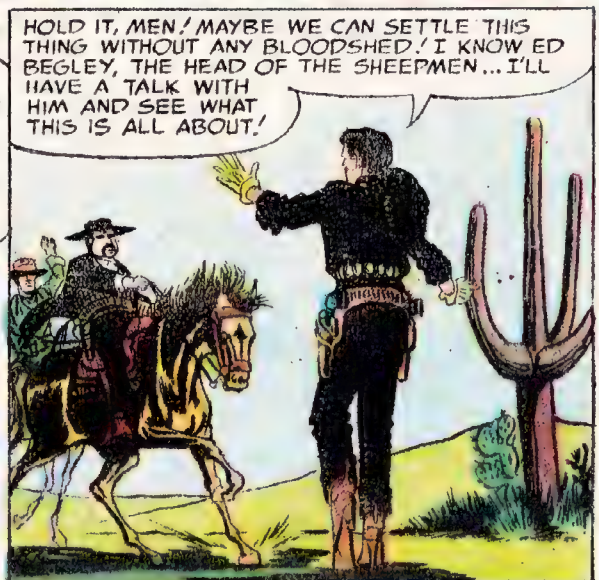
OH THAT WAS A LONG
TIME AGO! RIGHT NOW
I'M A RESPECTABLE
CATTLEMAN... HEAD OF
THE ASSOCIATION TOO!
AND SOMEBODY'S BEEN
POISONING OUR WATER
SUPPLY! AND I GOT A
HUNCH IT'S THE
SHEEPHERDERS!

SHEEPHERDERS?
WHAT ARE YOU
TALKING ABOUT?
THOUGHT YOU
HAD A TRUCE
WITH THEM!

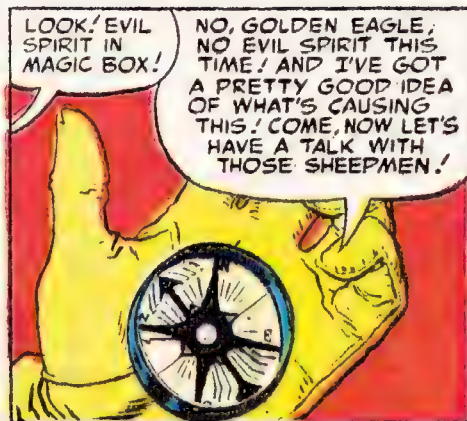
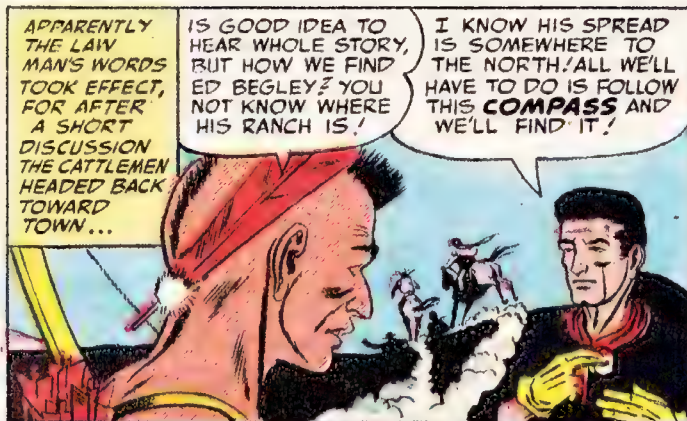


SO DID WE! AND ONE OF
THE TERMS OF THE TRUCE
WAS THE SHARING OF THIS
WATER HOLE! BUT I GUESS
THEY FIGURED IF THEY
COULDN'T HAVE IT ALL
FOR THEIR OWN USE
THEN NOBODY
COULD HAVE IT!

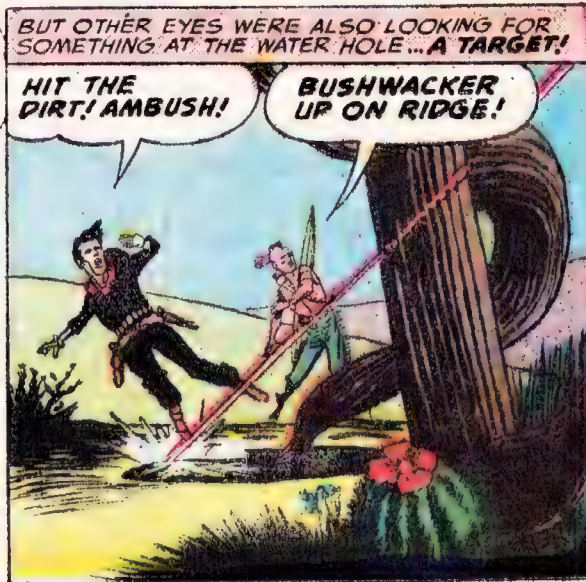
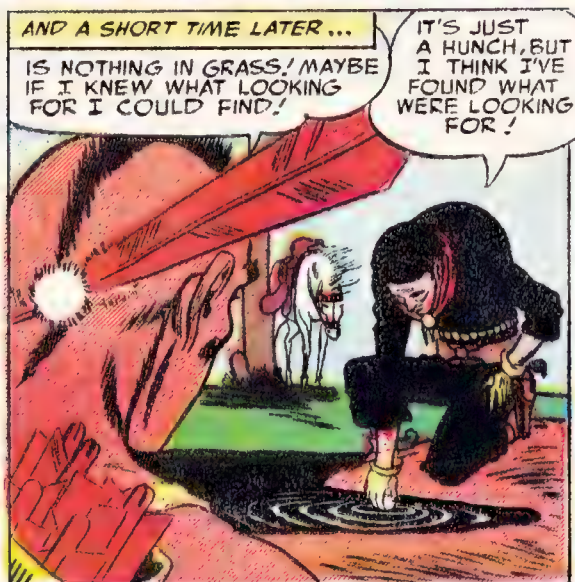
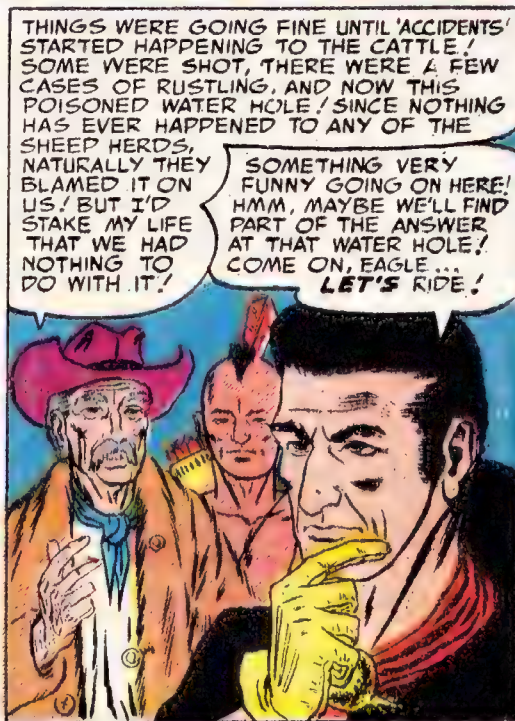
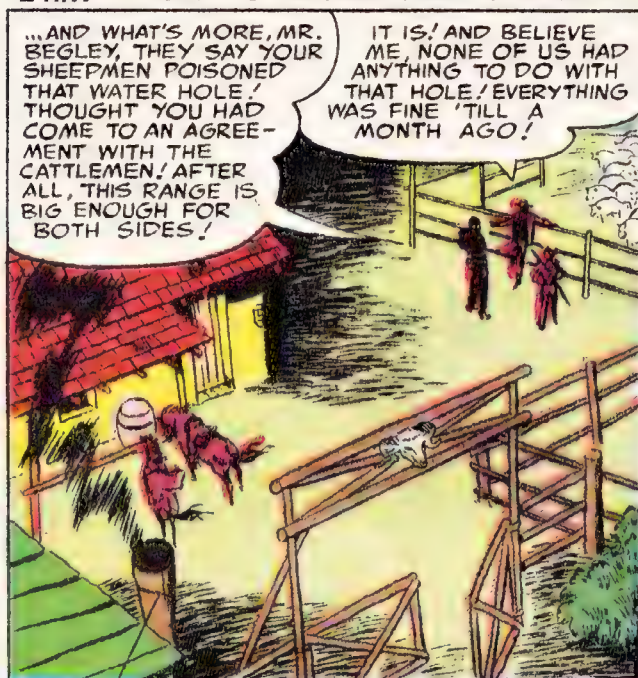
THAT'S RIGHT!
SILAS' FOREMAN
SAYS HE SAW
SOME OF THEM
SHEEPMEN AROUND
HERE THE OTHER
DAY... THAT'S EVIDENCE
ENOUGH FOR ME! I
SAY **LET'S RIDE!** GET
IT STRAIGHTENED OUT
ONCE AND FOR ALL!

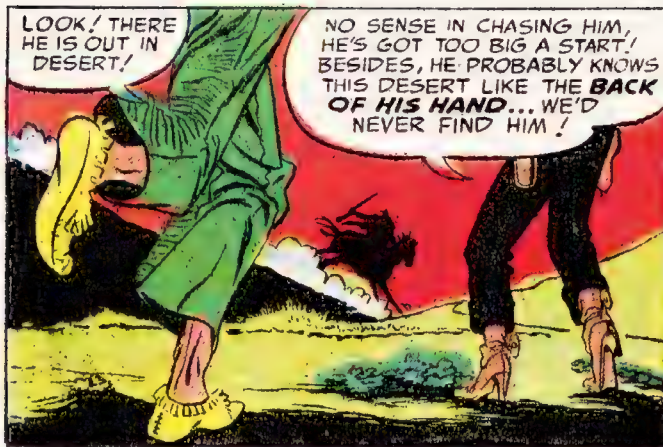


HOLD IT, MEN! MAYBE WE CAN SETTLE THIS
THING WITHOUT ANY BLOODSHED! I KNOW ED
BEGLEY, THE HEAD OF THE SHEEPMEN... I'LL
HAVE A TALK WITH
HIM AND SEE WHAT
THIS IS ALL ABOUT!



IT WAS A PERPLEXED INDIAN WHO FOLLOWED THE UTAH KID NORTH TO THE SHEEP RANCH OF ED BEGLEY!





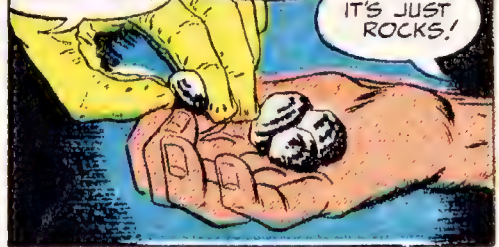
LOOK! THERE HE IS OUT IN DESERT!

NO SENSE IN CHASING HIM, HE'S GOT TOO BIG A START! BESIDES, HE PROBABLY KNOWS THIS DESERT LIKE THE BACK OF HIS HAND... WE'D NEVER FIND HIM!

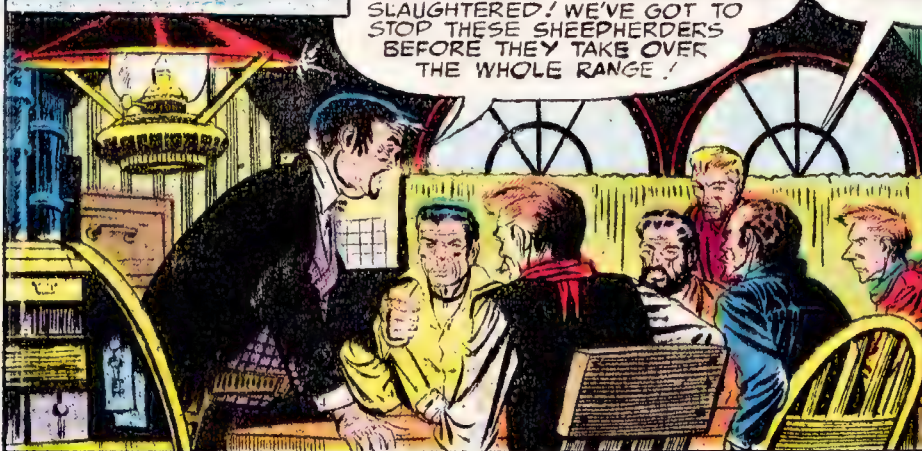
THE BUSHWACKER WAS FORGOTTEN AS THE LAW MAN TURNED TO THE BUSINESS AT HAND...

TAKE THESE INTO TOWN AND GIVE THEM TO TODD JACKSON, THE ASSAYER! I WANT A THOROUGH REPORT ON THESE SAMPLES AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE! I'LL BE AT THE CATTLE ASSOCIATION MEETING IN CASE YOU NEED ME!

IT'S JUST ROCKS!



AND A FEW HOURS LATER AT THE MEETING OF THE CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION!



I SAY THINGS HAVE GONE TOO FAR ALREADY! THIS MORNING I FOUND SIX OF MY BEST BREEDING STOCK SLAUGHTERED! WE'VE GOT TO STOP THESE SHEEPHERDERS BEFORE THEY TAKE OVER THE WHOLE RANGE!

SILAS IS RIGHT! MY HERD WAS HIT BY RUSTLERS AGAIN LAST NIGHT!



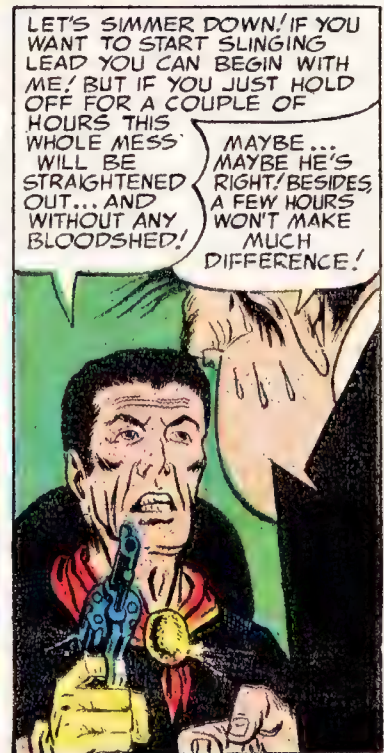
AND THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE BUNCH BEHIND! THIS... THE SHEEPMEN! AND IT'S UP TO US TO PROTECT OUR RIGHTS... WE'VE GOT TO FIGHT THEM!

THEN WHAT ARE WE SITTING HERE FOR? IF WE'RE GONNA FIGHT 'EM, LET'S RIDE!



HOLD UP THERE, GENTLEMEN! NO SENSE IN GOING OFF HALF-CKOCKED ABOUT THIS! FROM WHAT I UNDERSTAND THOSE SHEEPHERDERS SHOOT PRETTY GOOD!

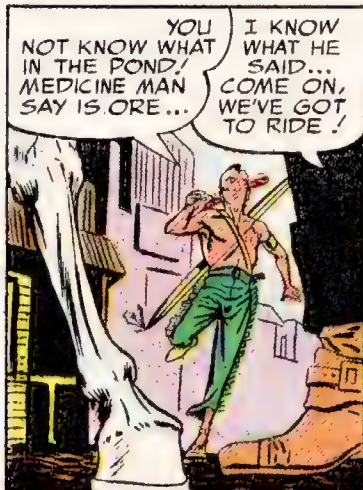
DON'T STOP US! WE'RE GONNA FINISH THIS OFF ONCE AND FOR ALL!



LET'S SIMMER DOWN! IF YOU WANT TO START SLINGING LEAD YOU CAN BEGIN WITH ME! BUT IF YOU JUST HOLD OFF FOR A COUPLE OF HOURS THIS WHOLE MESS WILL BE STRAIGHTENED OUT... AND WITHOUT ANY BLOODSHED!

MAYBE... MAYBE HE'S RIGHT! BESIDES A FEW HOURS WON'T MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE!

AFTER SOOTHING THE RUFFLED COWMEN, THE UTAH KID WENT DOWN INTO THE STREET TO MEET GOLDEN EAGLE!

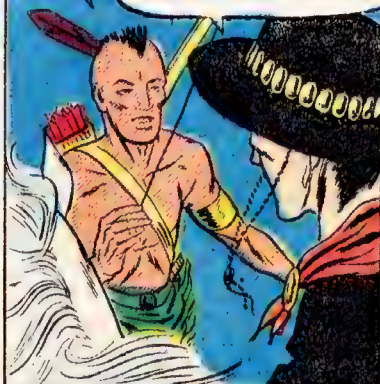


YOU NOT KNOW WHAT IN THE POND! MEDICINE MAN SAY IS ORE...

I KNOW WHAT HE SAID... COME ON, WE'VE GOT TO RIDE!

BUT YOU NOT SEE REPORT! COME, I SHOW YOU AT OFFICE!

NOT NOW, BESIDES, I ALREADY KNOW! BUT THERE'S SOMEBODY I'VE GOT TO SEE IN A HURRY! THEN WE'VE GOT TO DROP IN ON ED BEGLEY... HE'LL BE GLAD TO HEAR THE NEWS!



THIS IS WAY TO SILAS BROWN RANCH! IS HE MAN WE GO SEE?

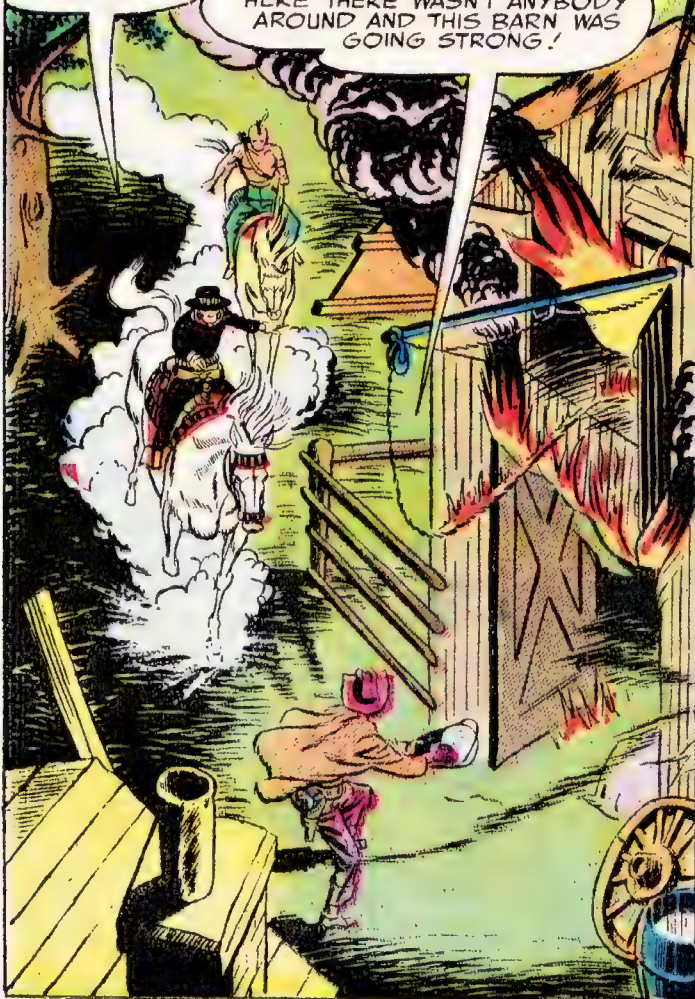
THAT'S RIGHT, EAGLE... BUT LOOK, SMOKE! HIT THAT SADDLE, WE'VE GOT TO MAKE TIME!



THE UTAH KID AND HIS COMPANION RODE HARD TOWARD THE BLAZING BUILDING AND PULLED UP SHORT AT THE SIGHT THAT GREETED THEM...

ED BEGLEY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

CAME OVER TO SEE BLACK! THOUGHT MAYBE WE COULD STRAIGHTEN OUT THIS BUDDING RANGE WAR! BUT WHEN I GOT HERE THERE WASN'T ANYBODY AROUND AND THIS BARN WAS GOING STRONG!



AND A FEW MOMENTS LATER...

SEE, JUST WHAT I TOLD YOU SHERIFF! THE UTAH KID AND THAT INDIAN HAD THROWN IN WITH THE SHEEPHERDERS! AND THIS TIME WE CAUGHT THEM REDHANDED BURNING DOWN MY BARN!

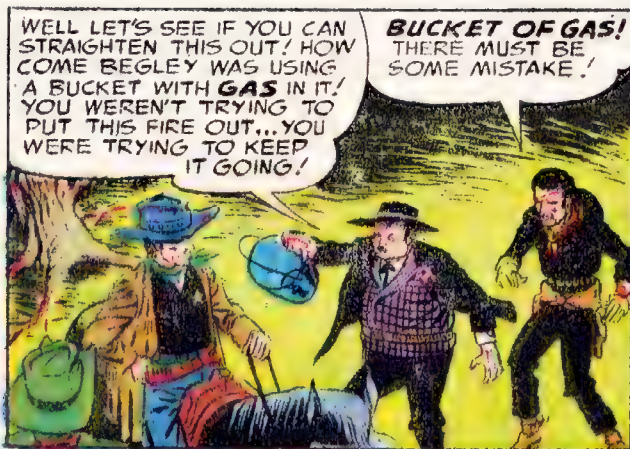
LOOKS LIKE SILAS IS RIGHT! WHAT HAVE YOU THREE GOT TO SAY FOR YOURSELVES!



WHAT! THAT MAN'S CRAZY! I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS FIRE! I JUST CAME OVER TO TALK TO HIM, BUT I CAN SEE THE ONLY WAY HE WANTS TO TALK IS WITH GUNS!

HOLD IT, ED... THAT KIND OF TALK WON'T GET US ANYPLACE... MAYBE I CAN STRAIGHTEN THIS OUT!

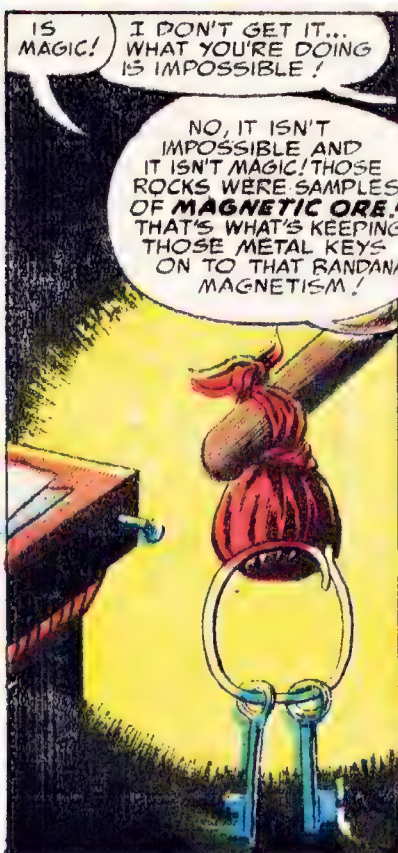
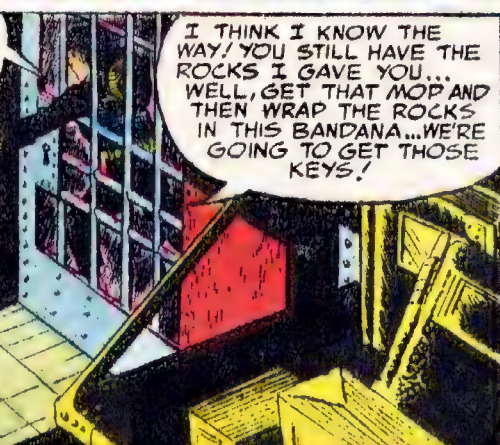




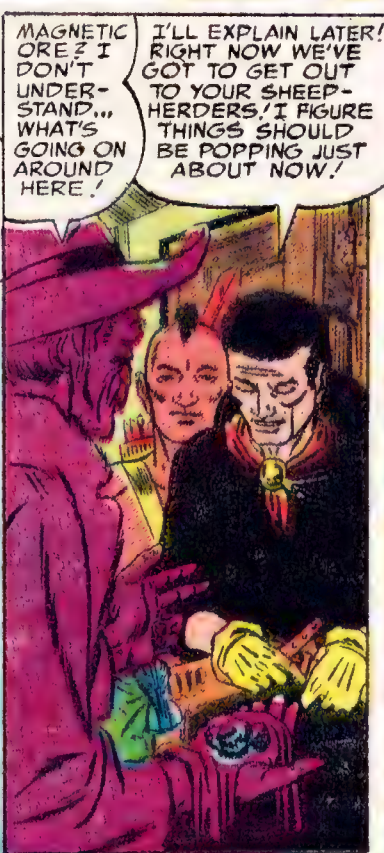
BUCKET OF GAS!
THERE MUST BE
SOME MISTAKE!



FINE FIX! WE LOCKED
INSIDE WHEN EVERY-
THING HAPPENING
OUTSIDE! HOW WE
GET KEYS TO
ESCAPE!

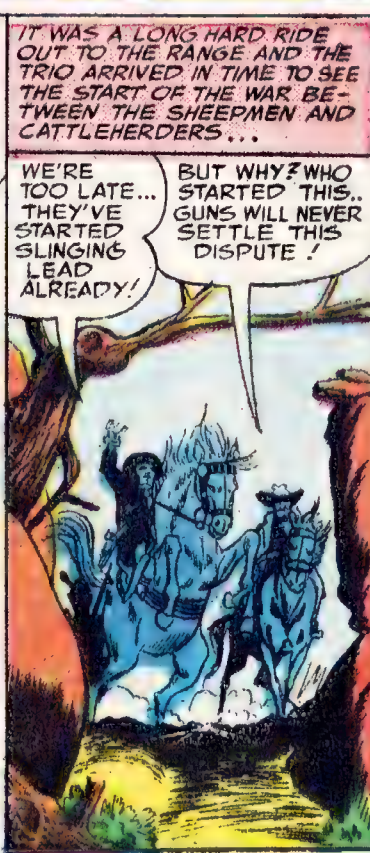


NO, IT ISN'T
IMPOSSIBLE AND
IT ISN'T MAGIC! THOSE
ROCKS WERE SAMPLES
OF **MAGNETIC ORE!**
THAT'S WHAT'S KEEPING
THOSE METAL KEYS
ON TO THAT BANDANA!
MAGNETISM!



MAGNETIC
ORE? I
DON'T
UNDER-
STAND...
WHAT'S
GOING ON
AROUND
HERE!

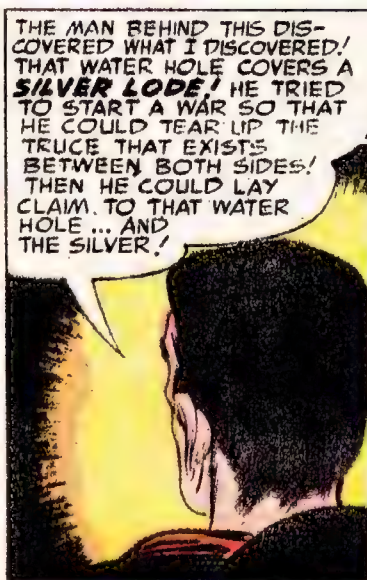
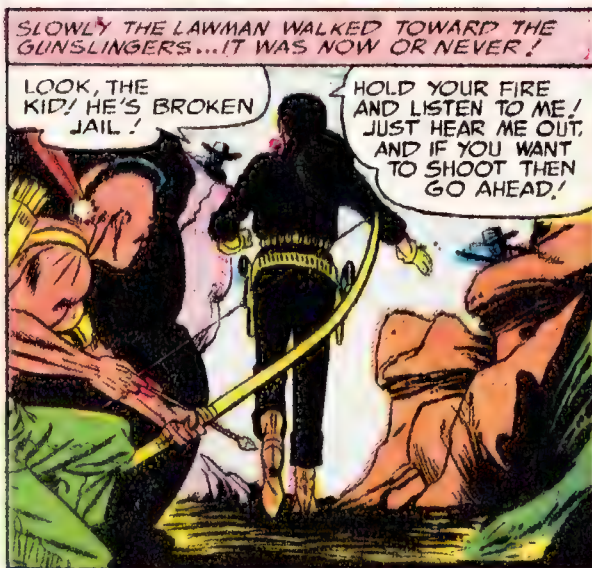
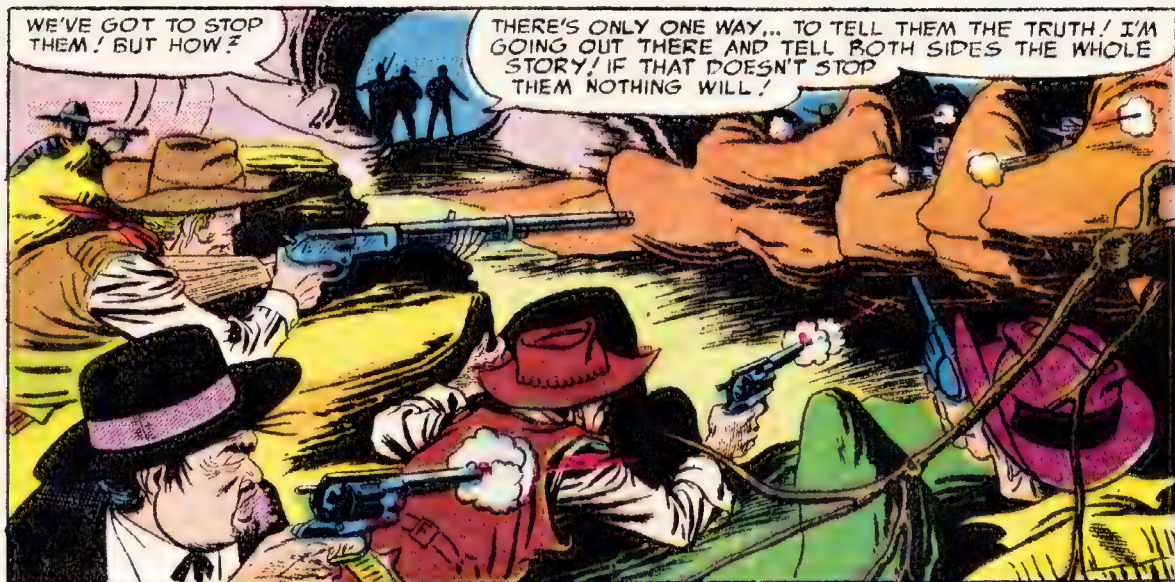
I'LL EXPLAIN LATER!
RIGHT NOW WE'VE
GOT TO GET OUT
TO YOUR SHEEP-
HERDERS! I FIGURE
THINGS SHOULD
BE POPPING JUST
ABOUT NOW!

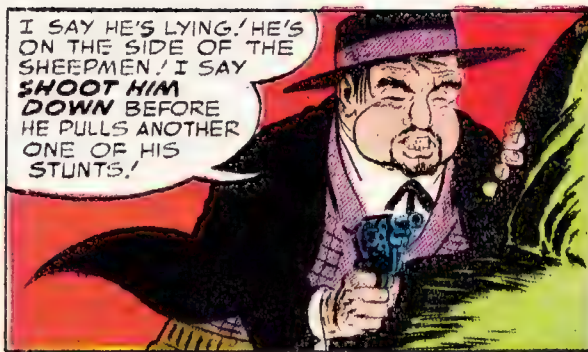


IT WAS A LONG HARD RIDE
OUT TO THE RANGE AND THE
TRIO ARRIVED IN TIME TO SEE
THE START OF THE WAR BE-
TWEEN THE SHEEPMEN AND
CATTLEHERDERS...

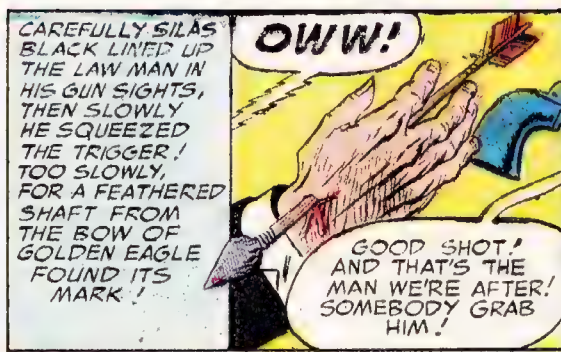
WE'RE
TOO LATE...
THEY'VE
STARTED
SLINGING
LEAD
ALREADY!

BUT WHY? WHO
STARTED THIS...
GUNS WILL NEVER
SETTLE THIS
DISPUTE!





I SAY HE'S LYING! HE'S ON THE SIDE OF THE SHEEPMEN! I SAY **SHOOT HIM DOWN** BEFORE HE PULLS ANOTHER ONE OF HIS STUNTS!



CAREFULLY SILAS BLACK LINED UP THE LAW MAN IN HIS GUN SIGHTS, THEN SLOWLY HE SQUEEZED THE TRIGGER! TOO SLOWLY, FOR A FEATHERED SHAFT FROM THE BOW OF GOLDEN EAGLE FOUND ITS MARK!

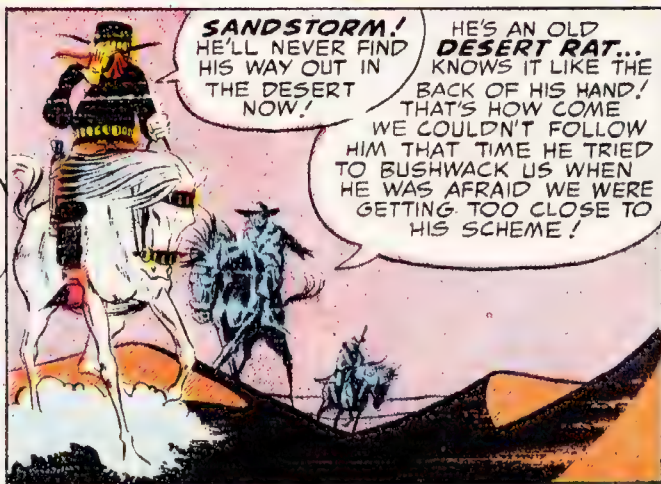
OWW!

GOOD SHOT! AND THAT'S THE MAN WE'RE AFTER! SOMEBODY GRAB HIM!

STUNNED BY THE NEWS, THE MEN WERE TOO SLOW TO TAKE SILAS BLACK INTO CUSTODY... AND HE WAS QUICK TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION!

HE MUST HAVE POISONED THAT WATER HOLE TO KEEP ANYBODY ELSE FROM FINDING OUT ABOUT THE SILVER!

THAT'S RIGHT, ED! BEING AN OLD PROSPECTOR HE KNEW RIGHT AWAY WHAT THAT ORE CONTAINED! AND IF IT WASN'T FOR MY COMPASS ACTING UP I WOULDN'T HAVE SUSPECTED A THING! NOW LET'S GO AFTER HIM!



SANDSTORM! HE'LL NEVER FIND HIS WAY OUT IN THE DESERT NOW!

HE'S AN OLD **DESERT RAT...** KNOWS IT LIKE THE BACK OF HIS HAND! THAT'S HOW COME WE COULDN'T FOLLOW HIM THAT TIME HE TRIED TO BUSHWACK US WHEN HE WAS AFRAID WE WERE GETTING TOO CLOSE TO HIS SCHEME!

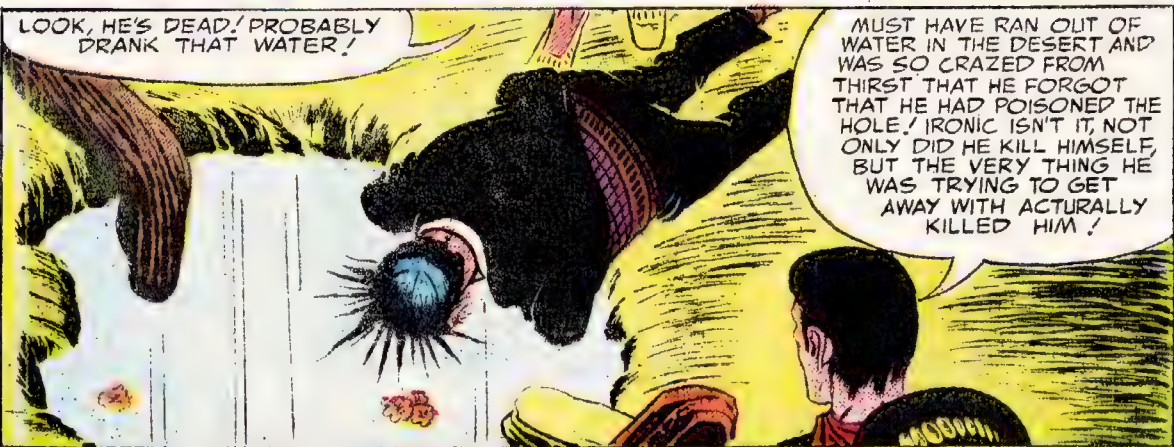
FOR DAYS THE UTAH KID AND HIS COHORTS FOLLOWED THE TRAIL OF THE OUTLAW... THERE WAS NO GIVING UP UNTIL THEY FOUND THEIR QUARRY!

LOOK! WE COMING OUT OF DESERT!

THERE'S THE WATER HOLE... AND TH-THERE'S BLACK!



LOOK, HE'S DEAD! PROBABLY DRANK THAT WATER!



MUST HAVE RAN OUT OF WATER IN THE DESERT AND WAS SO CRAZED FROM THIRST THAT HE FORGOT THAT HE HAD POISONED THE HOLE! IRONIC ISN'T IT, NOT ONLY DID HE KILL HIMSELF, BUT THE VERY THING HE WAS TRYING TO GET AWAY WITH ACTUALLY KILLED HIM!



THE THING

No 12

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WEIRD TALES OF SUSPENSE AND HORROR

CHARLTON PUBLICATION

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S.J. Ditko

HELLO, ONCE AGAIN, DEAR READERS... THIS TIME I BRING YOU A CHOICE SELECTION FROM MY VOLUME OF EERIE FAIRY-TALES... A WELL-KNOWN PLOT GUARANTEED TO KEEP YOU IN SUSPENSE. IN FACT, I ALWAYS GET A KICK OUT OF IT WHENEVER I READ IT... A KICK I'M SURE WILL LEAVE YOU GASPING AND SHAKEN... FOR IN FRONT OF YOU NOW IS...

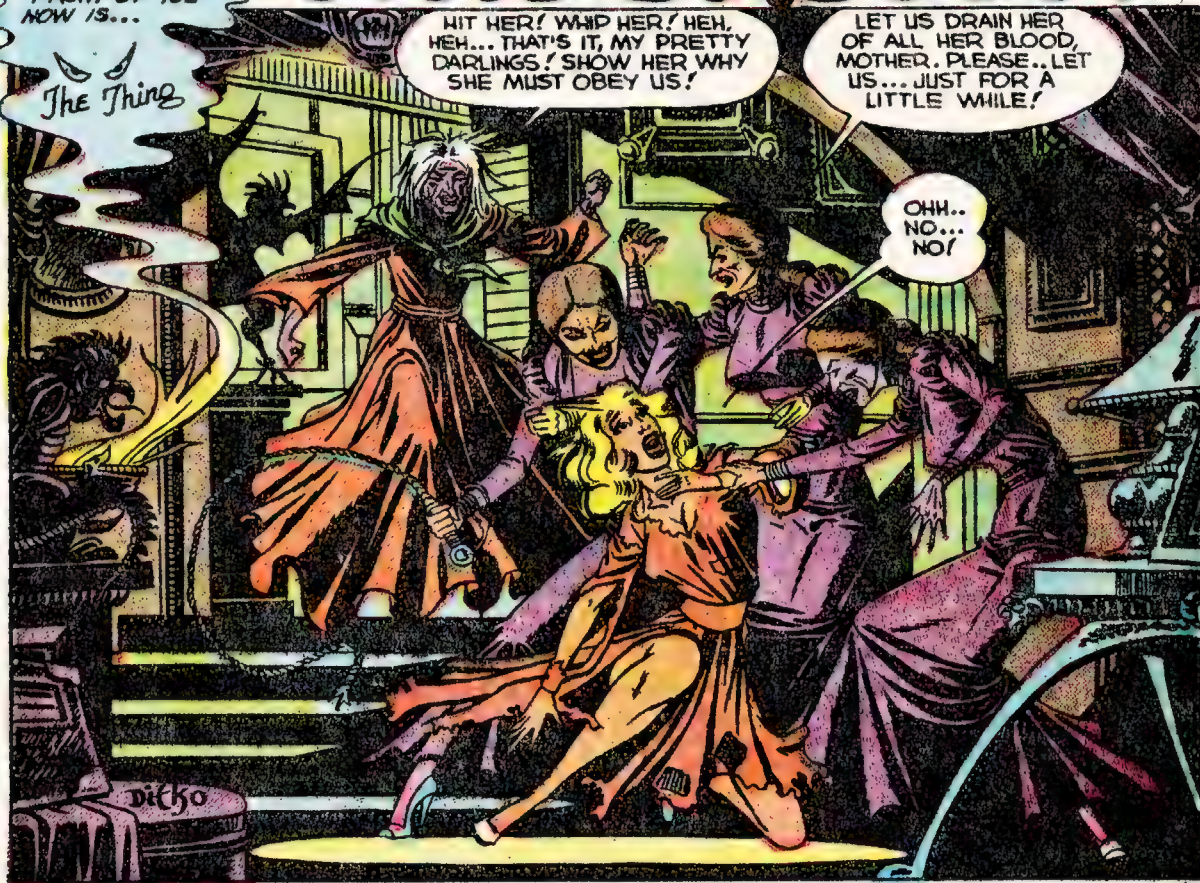
CINDERELLA

The Thing

HIT HER! WHIP HER! HEH, HEH... THAT'S IT, MY PRETTY DARLINGS! SHOW HER WHY SHE MUST OBEY US!

LET US DRAIN HER OF ALL HER BLOOD, MOTHER. PLEASE.. LET US... JUST FOR A LITTLE WHILE!

OH... NO... NO!



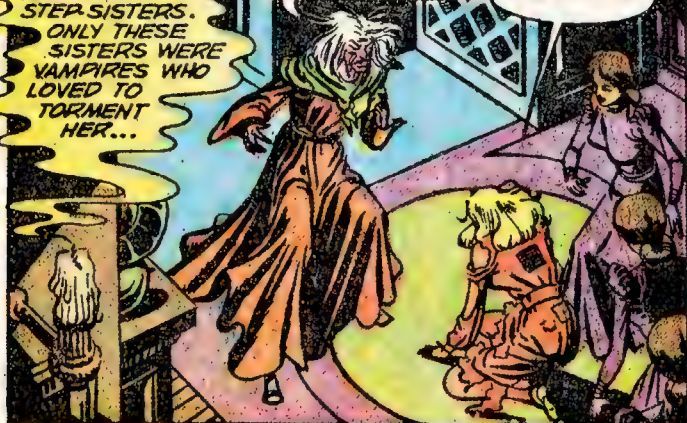
ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE WAS A GIRL CALLED CINDERELLA WHO HAD A STEP-MOTHER AND THREE STEP-SISTERS. ONLY THESE SISTERS WERE VAMPIRES WHO LOVED TO TORTURE HER...

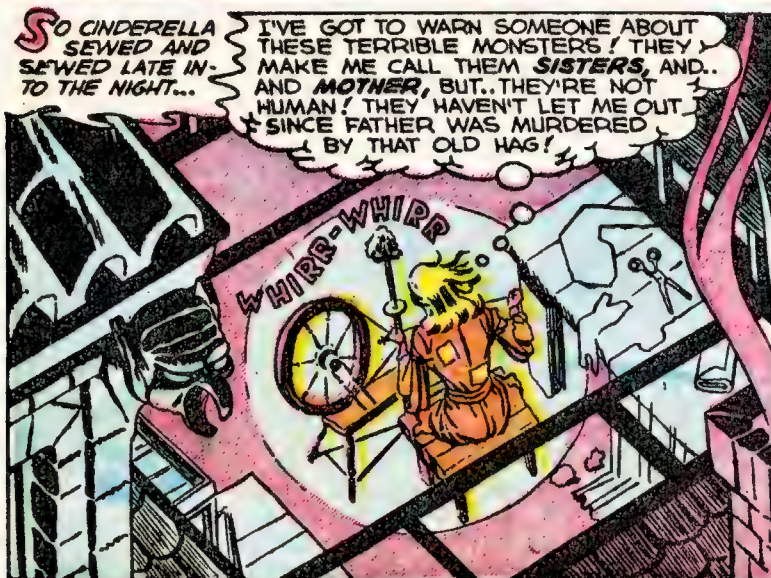
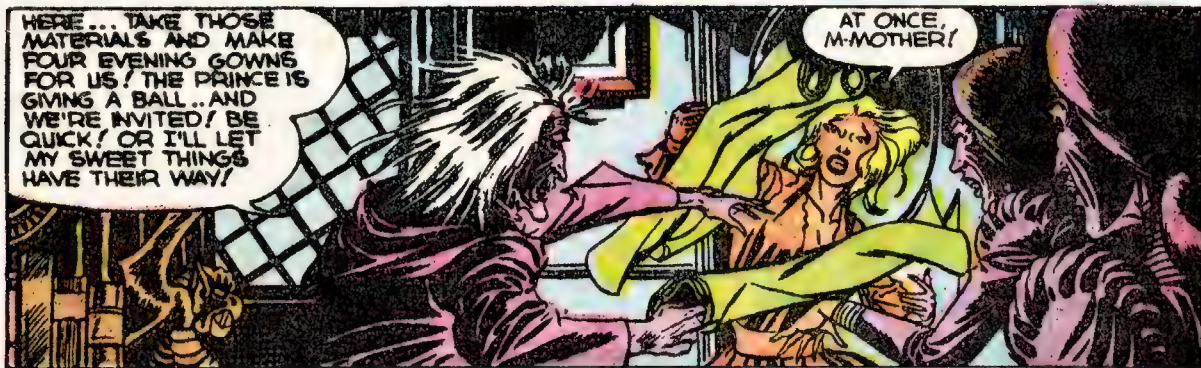
HUSH, SWEET ONES! WE MUSTN'T DO THAT TO POOR LITTLE CINDERELLA... FOR WHO WOULD MEND OUR CLOTHES, TEND TO OUR HOME, AND SWEEP IT CONSTANTLY? COME HERE, CINDERELLA!

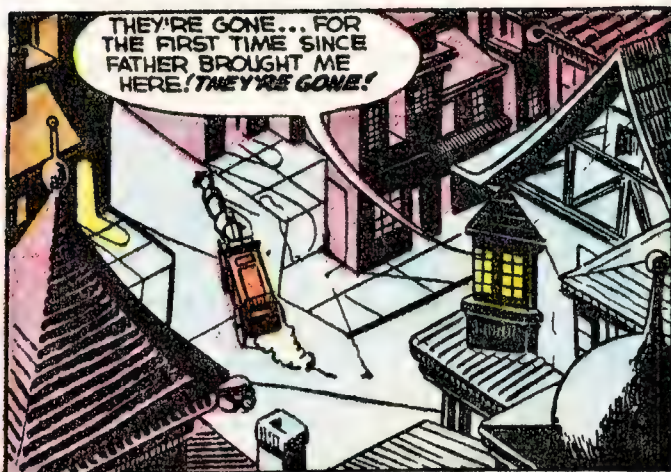
Y-YES, MOTHER...

YOU MUSTN'T PINCH GRISELDA, MY DEAR... YOU SEE? YOU MUST SEW AND SEW... SEE HOW EASY IT IS?

OH... I..I DROPPED A STITCH!

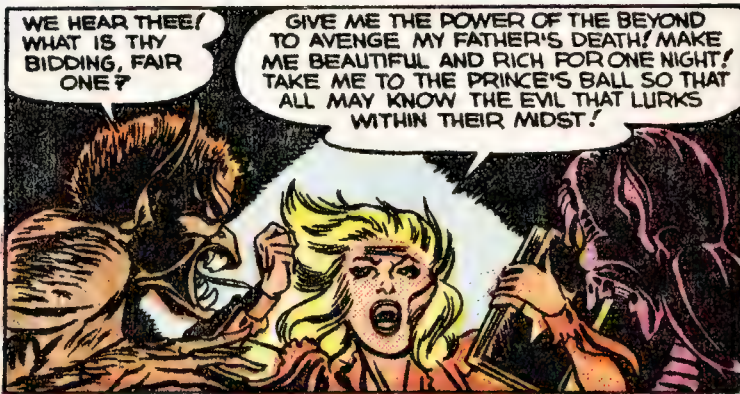




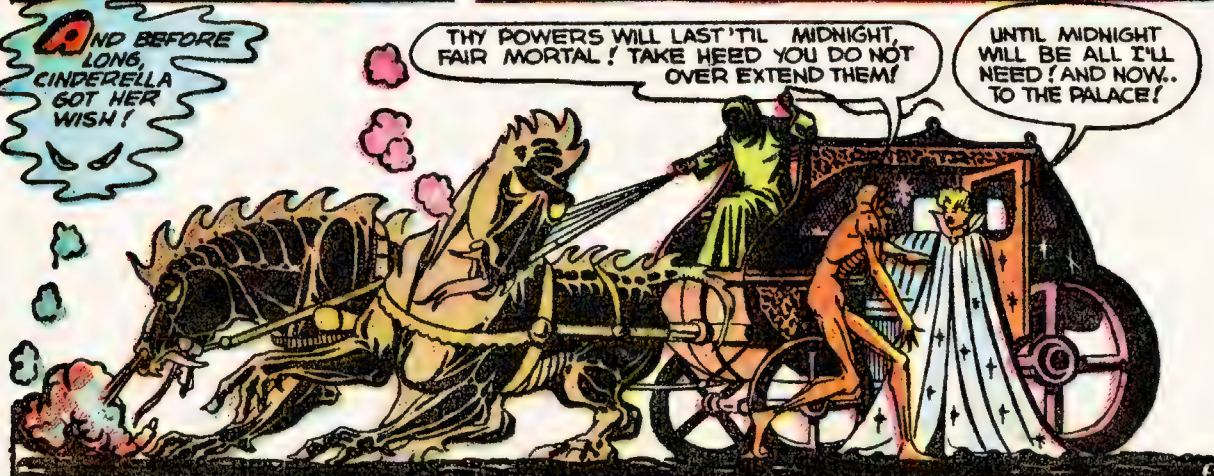


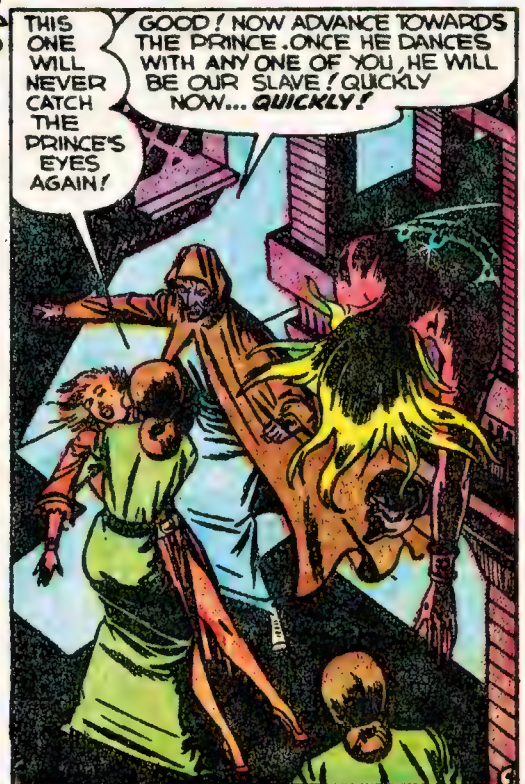
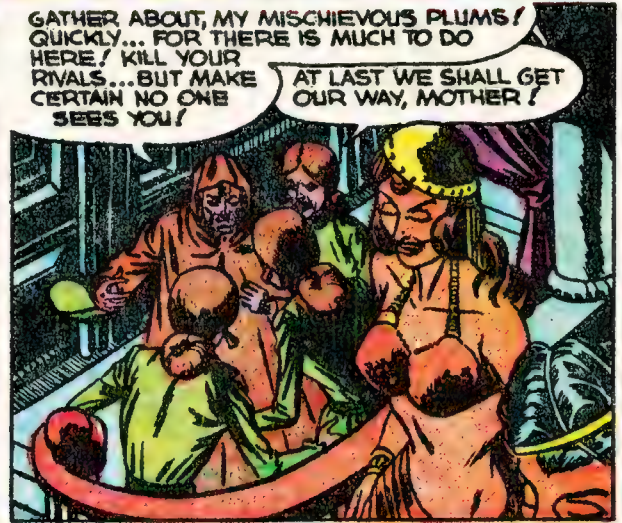
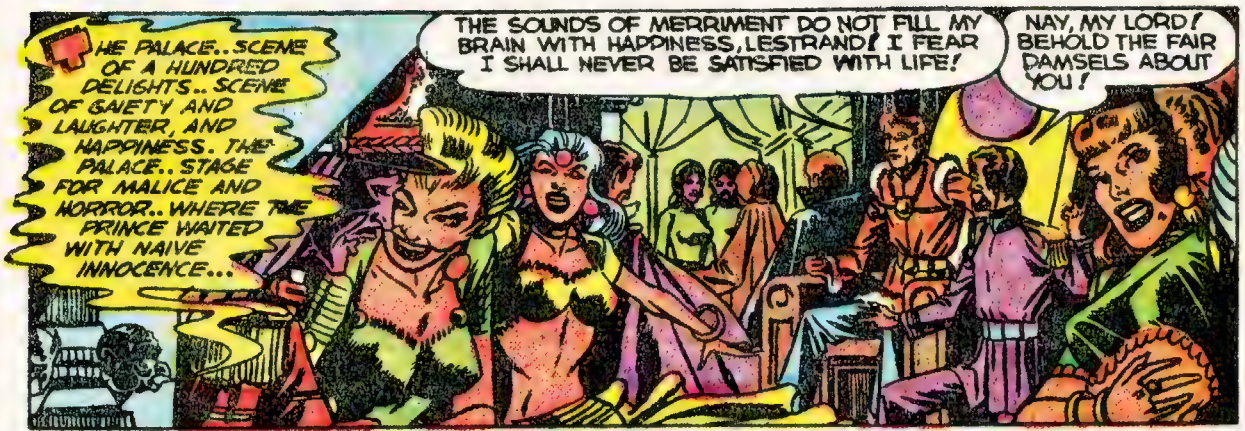
I IN THE CELLAR AFTERWARDS...

I KNOW WHY THEY'RE GOING TO THE BALL... TO LURE THE PRINCE INTO THEIR POWER. ONCE THE PRINCE BECOMES THEIR PUPPET, THEY'LL HAVE THEIR CHOICE OF THIS TOWN'S RICHEST BLOOD! WHAT BETTER WAY TO MAKE HIM THEIR SLAVE THAN BY ATTENDING THIS BALL?



AND BEFORE LONG, CINDERELLA GOT HER WISH!





BUT INTO THE PALACE CAME.. CINDERELLA!

NEVER IN MY LIFE HAVE I SEEN A MORE BEAUTIFUL COSTUME! WILL YOU DANCE WITH ME, FAIR LADY?

YES, MY LORD! WITH PLEASURE!



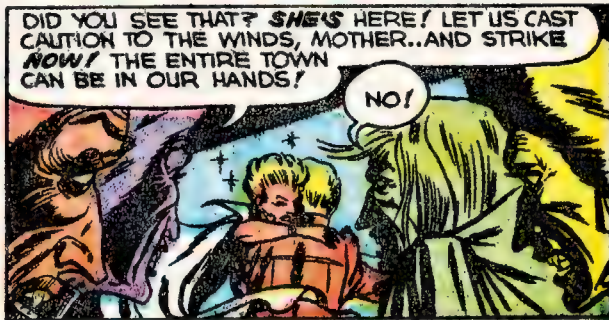
YOU MUST LISTEN TO ME, SIRE! PLEASE! THERE'S SOMETHING I MUST...

HUSH, MY BEAUTY! LET ME DRINK IN THE ECSTASY OF YOUR FACE! MUSIC! MELODY! FASTER! FASTER!



DID YOU SEE THAT? SHE'S HERE! LET US CAST CAUTION TO THE WINDS, MOTHER...AND STRIKE NOW! THE ENTIRE TOWN CAN BE IN OUR HANDS!

NO!



YOU'RE GETTING OLD, MOTHER! REMEMBER WHAT WE ARE... **VAMPIRES!** THESE MORTALS ARE NO MATCH FOR US!

WAIT! HAVE PATIENCE! THE PRINCE IS OUR SHEEP! HE WILL LEAD MANY OF HIS SUBJECTS TO SLAUGHTER! THEN TOO, CINDERELLA HAS ON THE SHINING CLOAK OF THE BEYOND! WE CANNOT HARM HER... UNTIL MIDNIGHT!

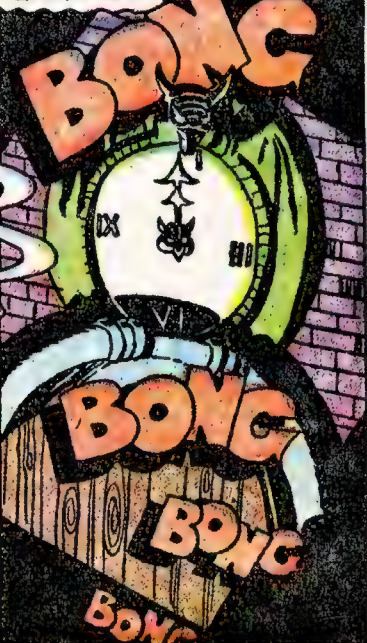


SO THEY DANCED AND DANCED... WITHOUT A SINGLE WORD BETWEEN THEM... A SINGLE WORD TO SAVE A TOWN AGAINST **DISASTER!**

I'LL TELL HIM NOW... EVEN IF HE BECOMES ANGRY! I MUST!



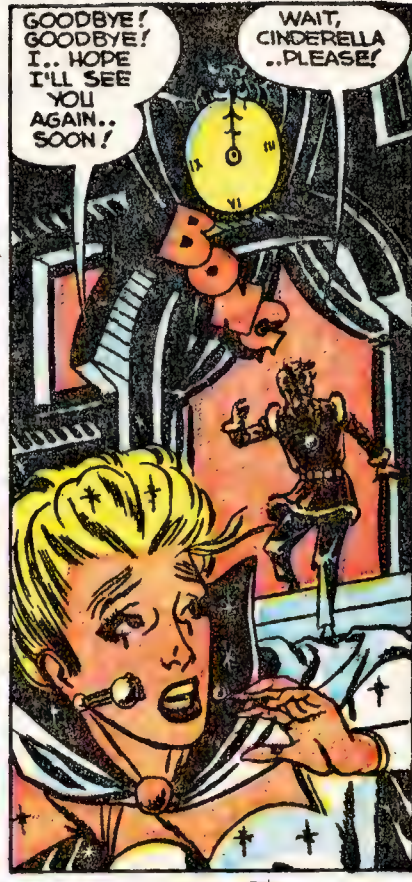
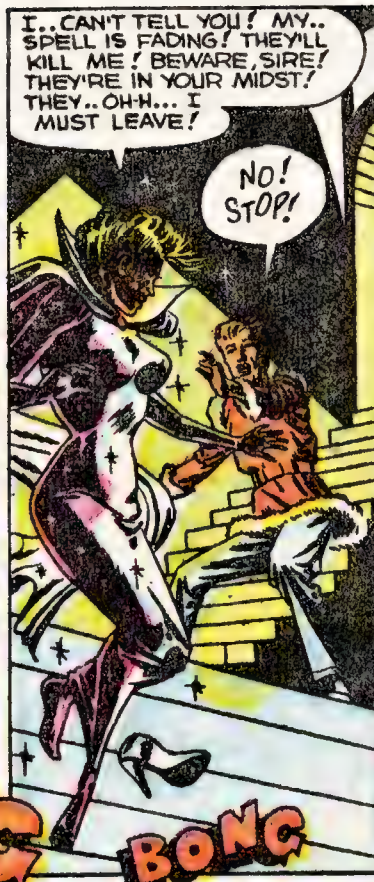
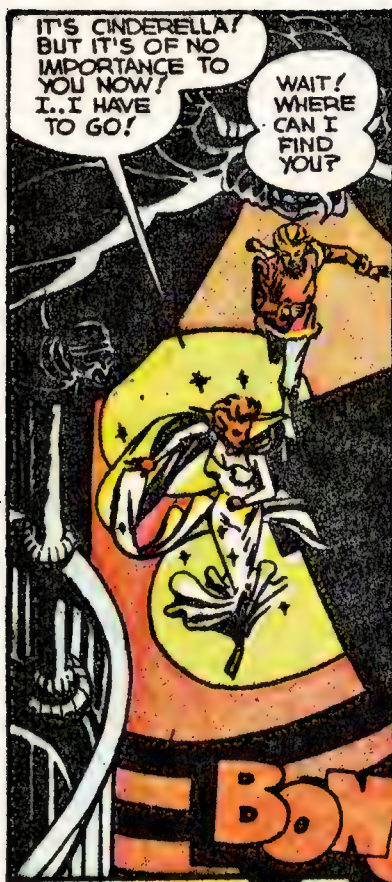
SUDDENLY...

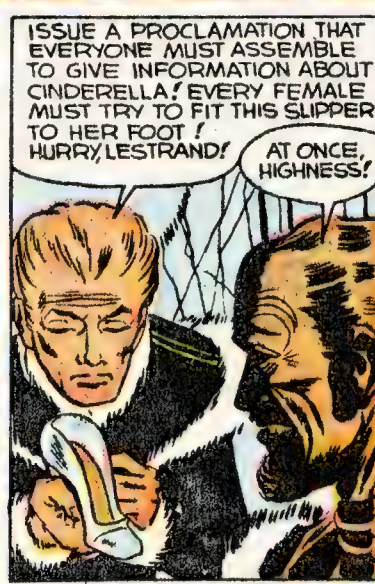
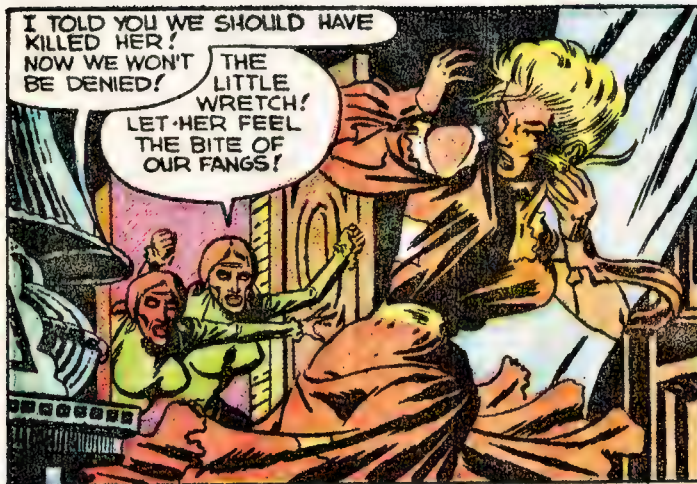


MIDNIGHT! IT CAN'T HAVE COME SO SOON!

YOU'RE PALE! WHAT'S WRONG? WHY... I DON'T EVEN KNOW YOUR NAME!









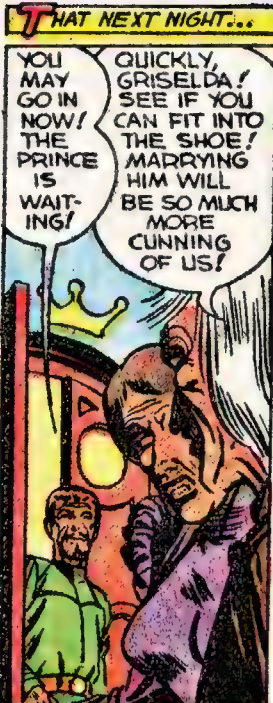
AND BECAUSE THE PRINCE WAS SO AMBITIOUS... HE FOUND CINDERELLA!

OH NO! MY BEAUTY! NO!

...ONLY HE WAS A VERY WISE PRINCE...

I FOUND **NOTHING** DOWN THERE! BUT I WANT YOU AND YOUR DAUGHTERS TO BE AT MY PALACE TOMORROW EVENING TO HAVE THE SLIPPER FITTED! NO ONE IN TOWN CAN SLIP INTO IT! OBVIOUSLY, THE SLIPPER MUST BE LONG TO ONE OF YOU! THAT ONE WILL BE MY **BRIDE!**

YES, MY LORD!



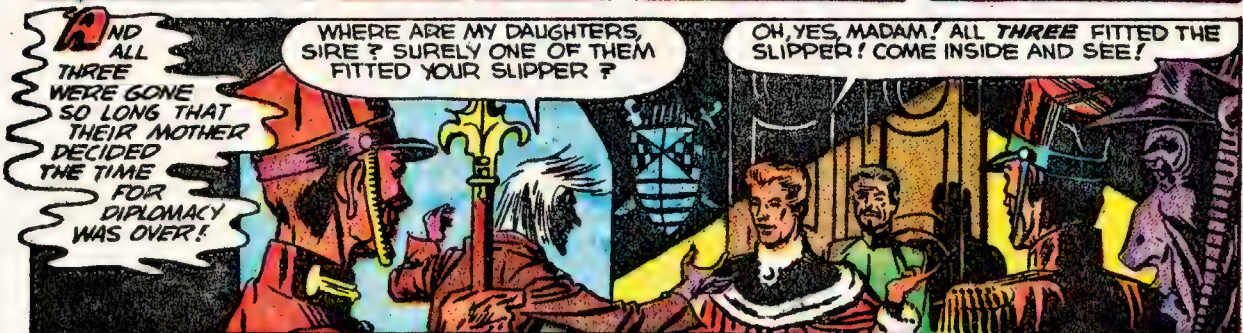
YOU MAY GO IN NOW! THE PRINCE IS WAITING!

QUICKLY, GRISELDA! SEE IF YOU CAN FIT INTO THE SHOE! MARRYING HIM WILL BE SO MUCH MORE CUNNING OF US!



COME, MY DEAR!

AND YOU'RE NEXT, SWEET CHILD!



AND ALL THREE WERE GONE SO LONG THAT THEIR MOTHER DECIDED THE TIME FOR DIPLOMACY WAS OVER!

WHERE ARE MY DAUGHTERS, SIRE? SURELY ONE OF THEM FITTED YOUR SLIPPER?

OH, YES, MADAM! ALL **THREE** FITTED THE SLIPPER! COME INSIDE AND SEE!



WHAT BEAUTIFUL FEET! WHAT WONDERFUL GIRLS! WE HAD SO MUCH TROUBLE **PERSUADING** THEM... DIDN'T WE, SIRE?

YES INDEED, LESTRAND! ESPECIALLY WHEN WE FOUND THEY WERE **VAMPIRES!**



BECAUSE, YOU SEE.. WHEN SUCH A DELICIOUS VICTIM LIKE CINDERELLA WAS **STOLEN** FROM US... SPEAKING AS ONE **VAMPIRE** TO ANOTHER, OLD HAG... WE JUST HAD TO MAKE YOUR DAUGHTERS HAPPY! THE SLIPPER FIT THEM ALL!

WELL... HEH! AND THE MORAL TO OUR LITTLE FAIRY TALE, DEAR READER? YES.. OF COURSE... DON'T BE TOO EAGER TO GET WHAT YOU WANT. YOU'LL NEVER KNOW WHEN YOU'LL **STICK YOUR FOOT INTO IT!**

The Thing

CDC
THIS MAGAZINE IS
HAUNTED

No 16

THIS MAGAZINE IS HAUNTED

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION

10¢

THE SEA HOLDS IN
ITS DEPTH MANY WEIRD
AND TERRORIZING TALES.
HEH...HEH...I'VE FOUND ONE
IN THIS ISSUE, "THE LAST
VOYAGE OF THE SEA WITCH."
I DARE YOU TO READ IT!

DR. DEATH

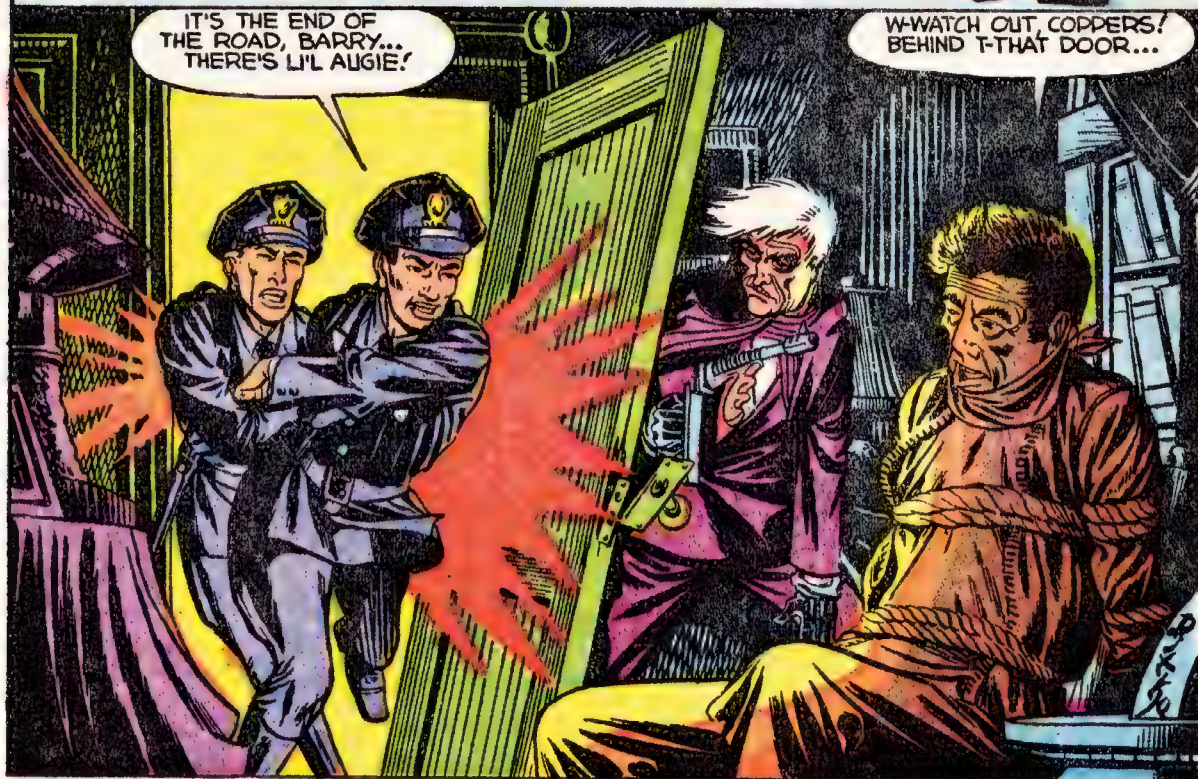


Ditso

RADIO PATROL

TEX A NAIL OF BULLETS... A MURDEROUS HIT-AND-RUN CAR... A HANDKERCHIEF REEKING OF CHEAP PERFUME! THAT WAS THE BLOOD-SOAKED TRAIL TEX AND BARRY OF THE RADIO PATROL WERE FOLLOWING... THE TRAIL LEFT BY A...

KILLER ON THE LOOSE



A QUIET AFTERNOON... A ROUTINE PATROL...

...AND THIS 3-D PICTURE WAS BIG AS LIFE...AND TWICE AS UGLY. YOU FELT AS IF YOU COULD REACH OUT AND TOUCH THE CHARACTERS!

I SAW THE SHOT MYSELF! WHEN THOSE GUNS WENT OFF I SHOOK AS IF I'D BEEN SHOT!

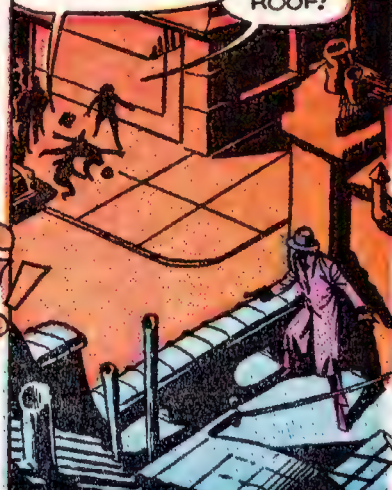
THOSE OLD FLAT PICTURES ARE GOOD ENOUGH FOR...HEY! GUN FIRE!

LOOK... OVER THERE

BANG!

THAT CHARACTER TOOK A CHESTFUL OF SLUGS!

LOOK, BARRY, UP THERE ON THE ROOF!





H-HIT THE PAVEMENT, EVERY-BODY... THAT MANIAC HAS A GRUDGE AGAINST THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE!



THIS GUY'S DEAD AS LAST YEAR'S NEWS-REEL!

AND THAT KILLER UP ON THE ROOF.. HE'S SKIPPED! C'MON.. LET'S GET UP THERE, PRONTO!



NOT A SIGN OF HIM! HE COULD'VE USED ANY OF THESE OTHER ROOFS TO MAKE HIS GET-AWAY!

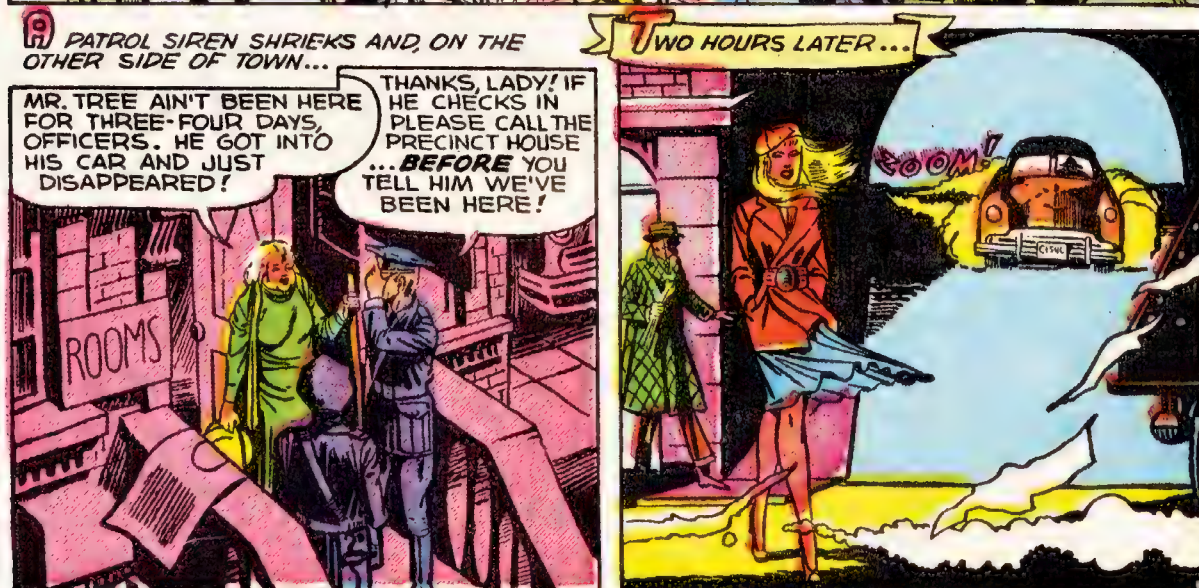
HE LEFT **SOME-THING** FOR US, ANYWAY! WE'LL CALL THE MEAT-WAGON FOR THE STIFF IN THE STREET... AND TAKE THIS GUN TO THE LAB!



A SHORT TIME LATER...

FINGERPRINTS ARE TOO SMUDGED TO BE IDENTIFIED. THE GUN IS REGISTERED BY AUGUST TREE...

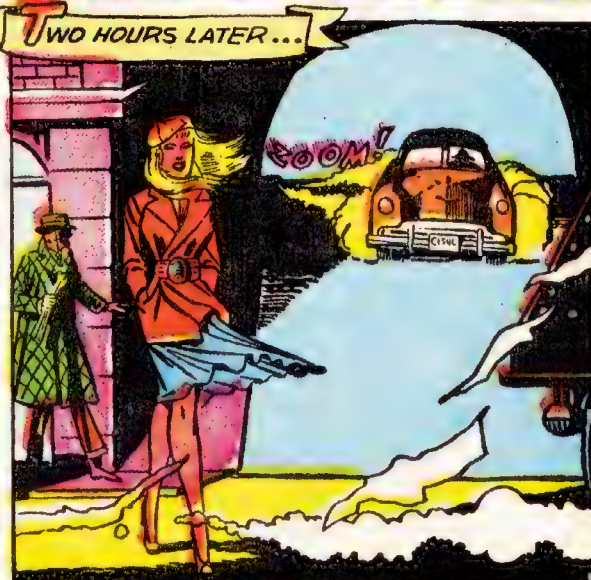
L'I'L AUGIE, EH? GET GOING, LADS... FIND OUT WHAT KIND OF ALIBI THAT STOOLEY HAS **THIS TIME!**



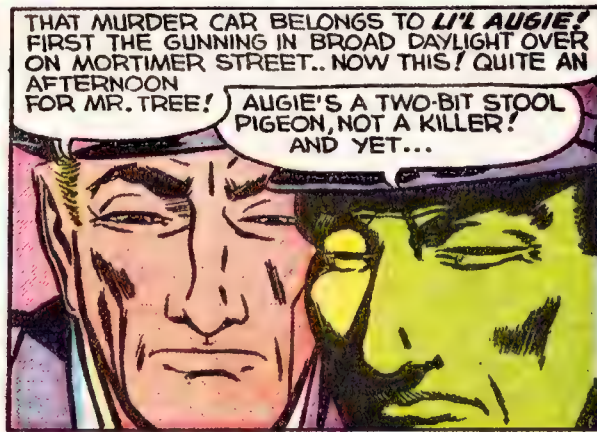
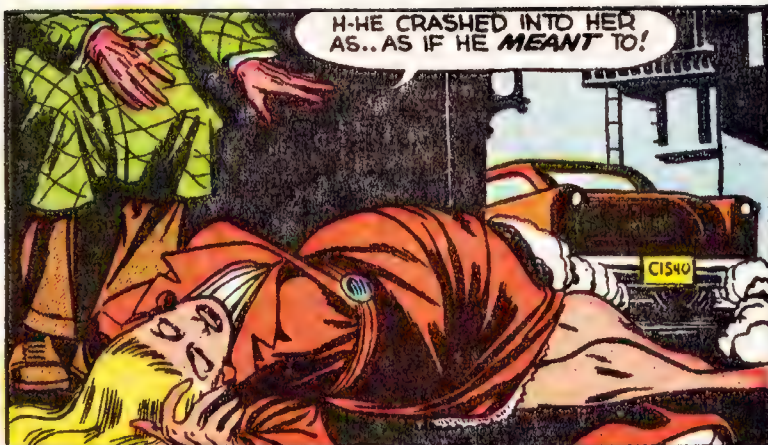
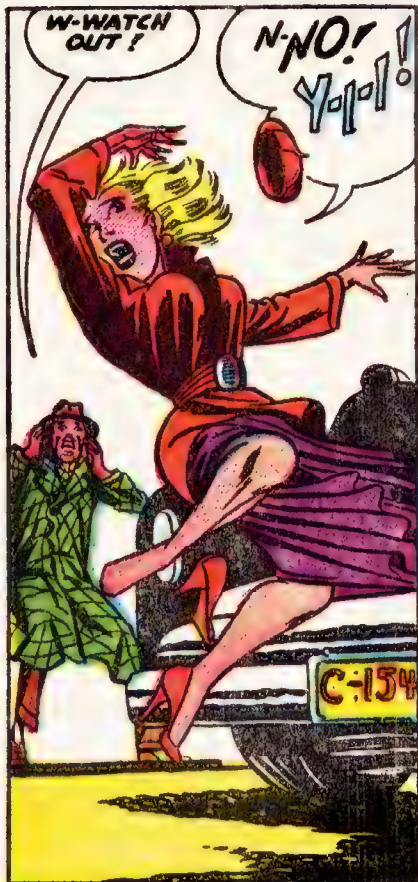
A PATROL SIREN SHRIEKS AND, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN...

MR. TREE AIN'T BEEN HERE FOR THREE-FOUR DAYS, OFFICERS. HE GOT INTO HIS CAR AND JUST DISAPPEARED!

THANKS, LADY! IF HE CHECKS IN PLEASE CALL THE PRECINCT HOUSE... **BEFORE** YOU TELL HIM WE'VE BEEN HERE!



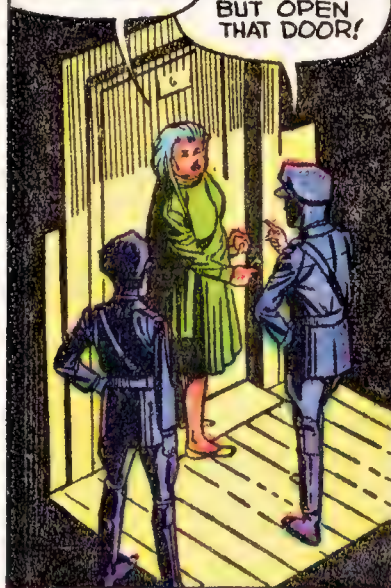
TWO HOURS LATER...



ONCE AGAIN THEY ROAR TO-
WARD A SHABBY ROOMING-
HOUSE, WHERE...

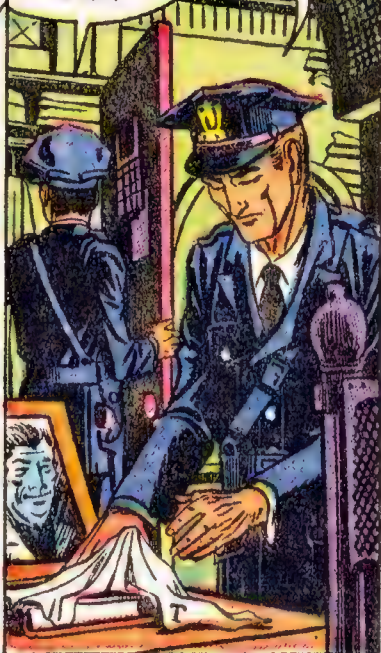
MR. TREE AIN'T
BACK YET... IT'S
LIKE HE'S BEEN
SWALLOWED UP!
IS IT RIGHT
AND PROPER
FOR ME TO
LET YOU IN-
TO HIS ROOM?

WE'RE
WEARING
OUR
CREDENTIALS,
MA'M. CHECK
WITH THE
MAYOR IF
YOU'RE
WORRIED..
BUT OPEN
THAT DOOR!



NOTHING DISTURBED HERE..
NO SIGN OF
AUGIE PLAN-
NING TO
VAMOOSSE!
SAY... THIS
PLACE SMELLS
LIKE A TEN
CENT DANCE
HALL!

PERFUME..
QUARTER-A-
GALLON TYPE
HERE.. THIS
HAND-
KERCHIEF!

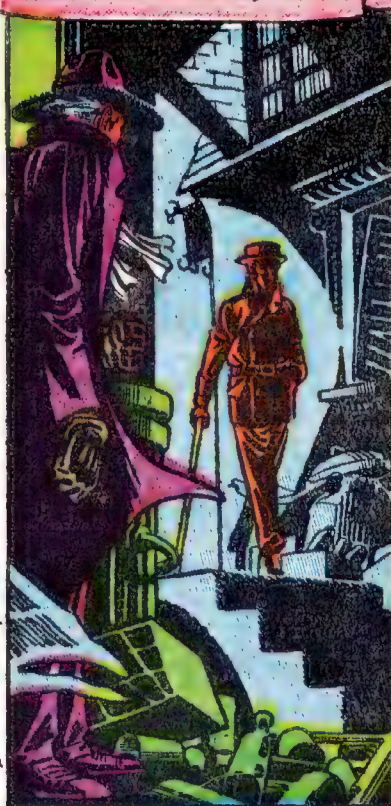


WE'RE NO
CLOSER TO
FINDING AUGIE
THAN WE
WERE BEF..
WHEW! YOU
CAN SMELL
THIS STUFF A
MILE AWAY!

NO TIME TO BE
SICK, TEX!
LET'S CHECK
BACK AND
SEE IF
HOMICIDE'S
FOUND ANY
CONNECTION
BETWEEN
THOSE TWO
KILLINGS!



A
N HOUR OF FEVERISH
ACTIVITY AT POLICE HEAD-
QUARTERS PASSES, THEN...



MM..
G/BB..

CHOKE IT OFF,
BROTHER! IT
WON'T DO YOU
NO GOOD...



I BEEN WAITING
A LONG TIME
TO TAKE CARE
OF YOU!

**A
L
E
E
E!**





SO LONG, SUCKER... NOW WE'RE SQUARE! THIS MAKES THREE DOWN... ONLY NINE MORE TO GO!

AGAIN THE PATROL CAR RADIO SQUAWKS... AND AGAIN TEX AND BARRY ARE FACED WITH GRISLY MURDER!

GOOD LORD, ANOTHER ONE! A WHOLE INSANE ASYLUM MUST'VE BUSTED LOOSE IN ONE AFTERNOON TO...HMM. SOMETHING IN THE AIR!

THAT PERFUME...IT'S HERE!

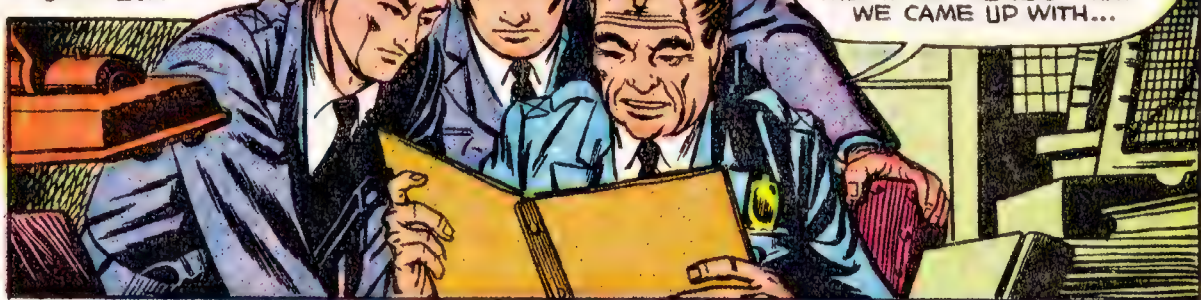


THE GUN...THE CAR...THE CHEAP PERFUME... ALL BELONGING TO AUGIE TREE! MUCH TOO PAT IF YOU ASK ME! KILLERS DON'T GO AROUND ADVERTISING!

CHECK! I'VE GOT THIS POOR GUY'S IDENTIFICATIONS, BARRY... LET'S GET TO HEAD-QUARTERS AND DO SOME BRAIN WORK!

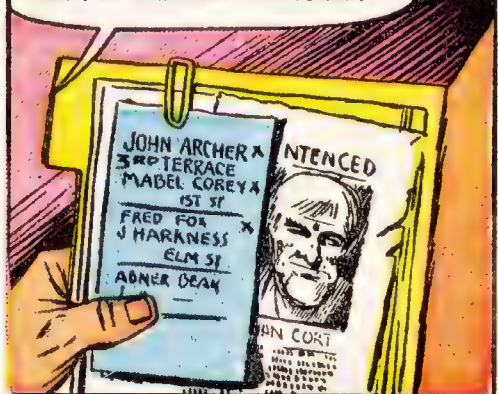


THE HOURS PASS AS THEY LOOK THROUGH TONS OF FILES. THEN, IN THE CHIEF'S OFFICE...



WE'VE BEEN WORKING LIKE BEAVERS ON THE NAMES OF THOSE THREE VICTIMS TO FIND OUT WHAT THEY HAD IN COMMON... WHO HAD REASON TO HATE THEM! AND HERE'S WHAT WE CAME UP WITH...

THE THREE VICTIMS SERVED TOGETHER ON A JURY FOUR YEARS AGO... THEIR NAMES TOPPED THE ALPHABETICAL LIST OF JURORS. THE NEXT NAME ON THE LIST IS HARKNESS... LET'S HOPE HE'S STILL BREATHING! GET GOING, YOU TWO...THERE ISN'T A SECOND TO LOSE!



JOHN ARCHER
307 TERRACE
MABEL COREYA
1ST ST
FRED FOX
J HARKNESS
ELM ST
ADNER DEAN

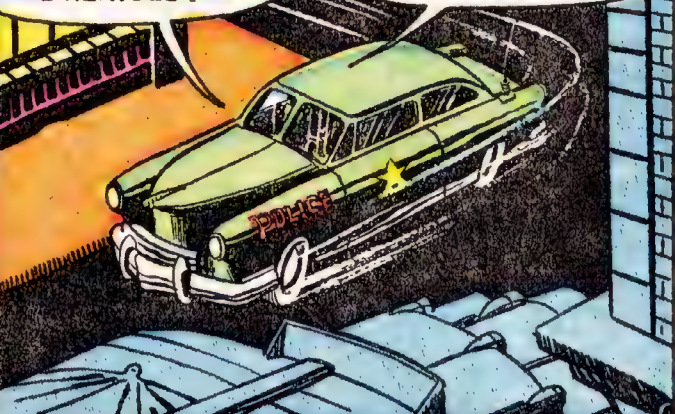
SENTENCED



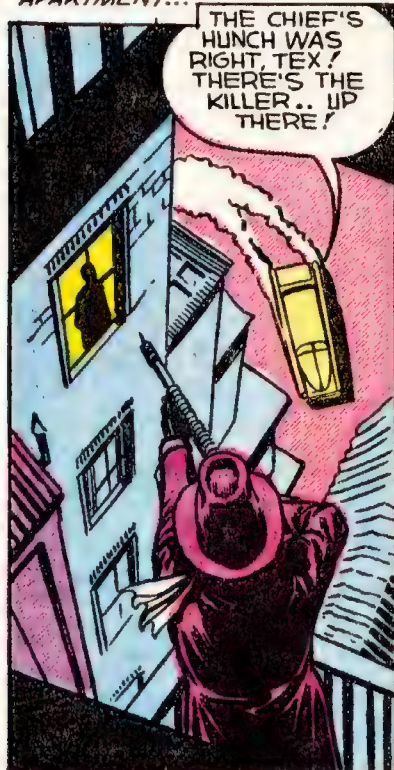
IAN COIT

CAN'T RISK USING THE SIREN... MIGHT SCARE THE KILLER AWAY WHILE HE STALKS HIS NEXT VICTIM! WHAT'S THE MATTER, BARRY? YOU NERVOUS?

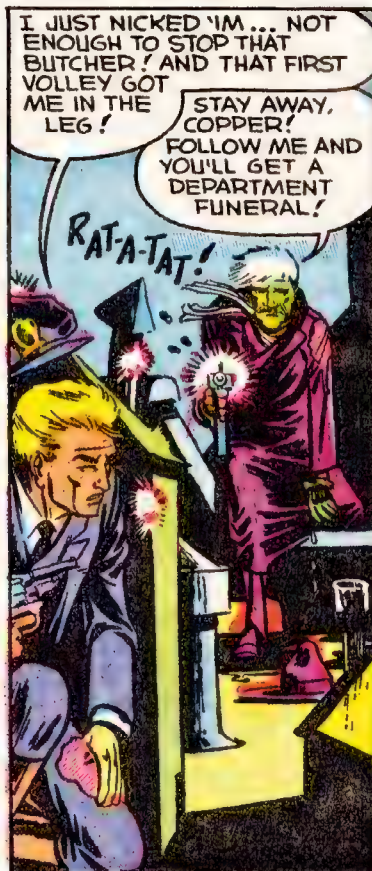
D-DON'T BE SILLY! I ENJOY HURTLING THROUGH CITY STREETS AT 85 MILES PER... IT'S A HATFUL OF LAUGHS! BRRR!

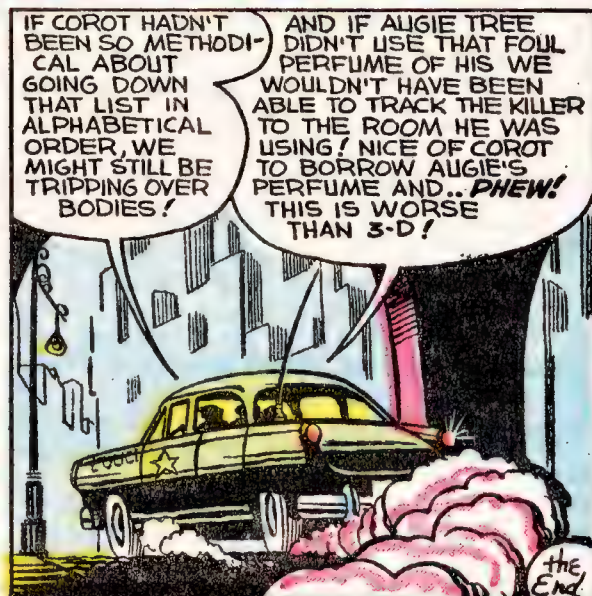
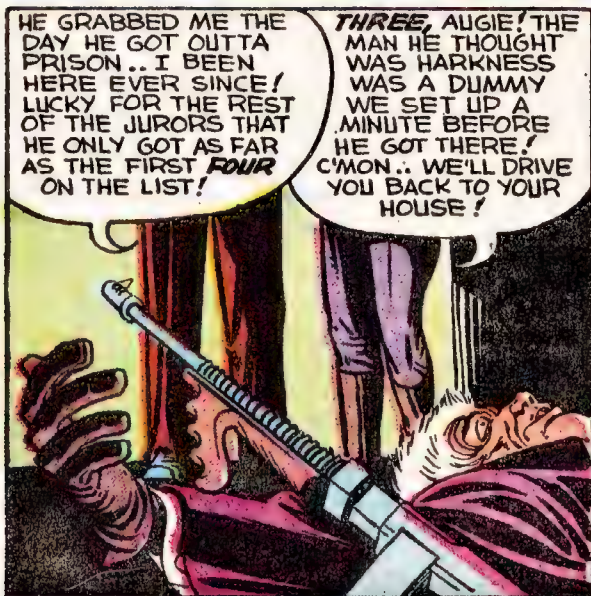
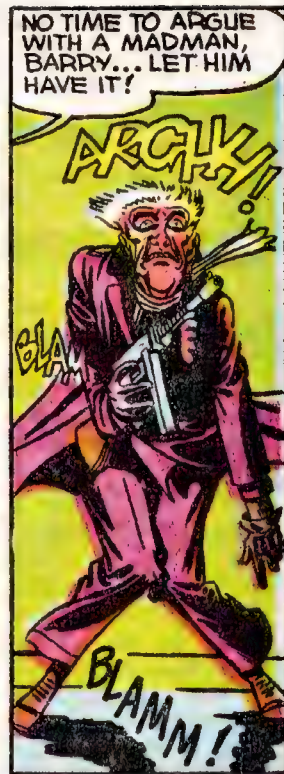


ANXIOUS MINUTES PASS AS THE RADIO PATROLMEN CARRY OUT A LAST MINUTE SCHEME. THEN, OUTSIDE THE HARKNESS APARTMENT...



RAT-TAT-TAT-A-TAT!







THE THING

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION

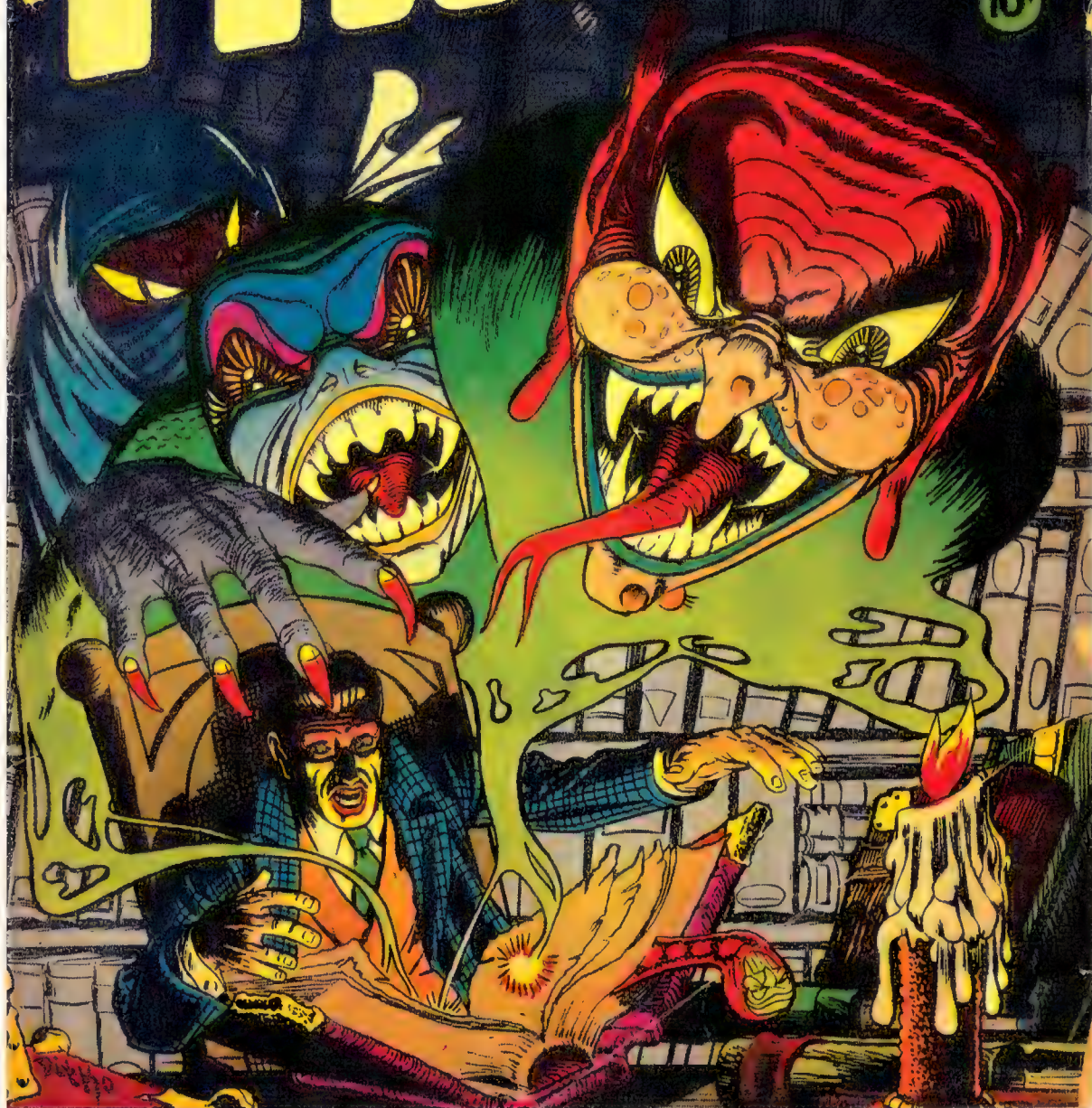
WEIRD TALES OF SUSPENSE AND HORROR

No. 13

THE

THING!

10¢



KEN ROLLAND WANTED GREATNESS AND HE WAS WILLING TO KILL FOR IT. BUT OUT OF THE STILLNESS OF THE OTHER WORLD CAME A HORROR THAT WAS WORSE THAN **DEATH**--FORCING HIM TO ITS WILL, MAKING HIM A SLAVE FOREVER TO---

LIBRARY OF HORROR

AS TOLD BY *The Thing*

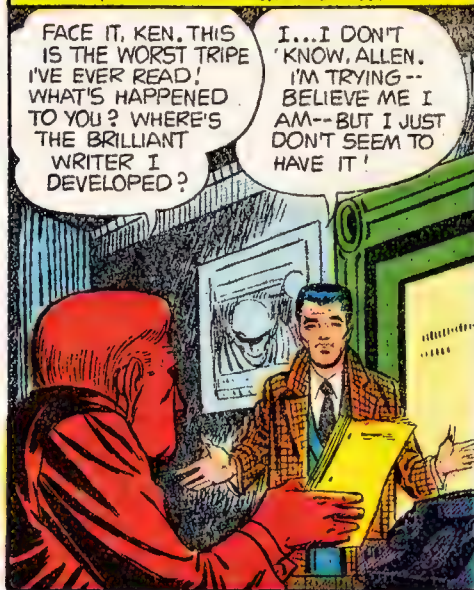


GOOD HEAVENS!
I'VE TRESPASSED INTO
THE **BEYOND**--AND
THERE'S **NO**
ESCAPE!

KEN ROLLAND HAD BEEN SLIPPING FOR A LONG TIME---BUT THIS DAY AT THE OFFICES OF **CHILLING MYSTERIES** WAS THE DAY OF RECKONING. GRIM-FACED ALLEN FARGO, EXECUTIVE EDITOR, FACED HIM SQUARELY...

FACE IT, KEN, THIS IS THE WORST TRIPE I'VE EVER READ! WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU? WHERE'S THE BRILLIANT WRITER I DEVELOPED?

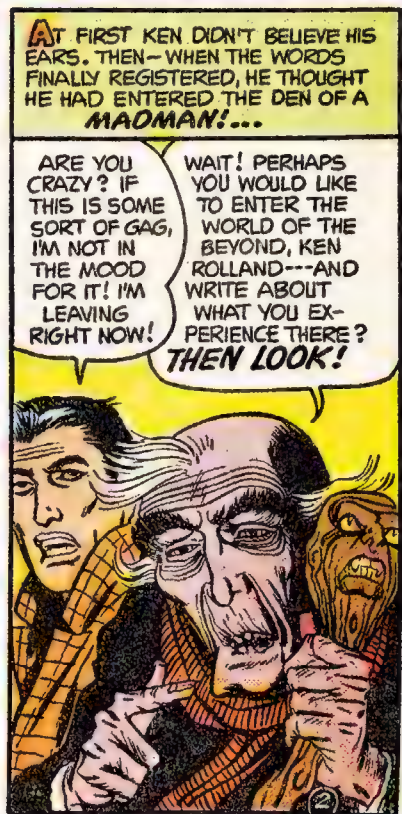
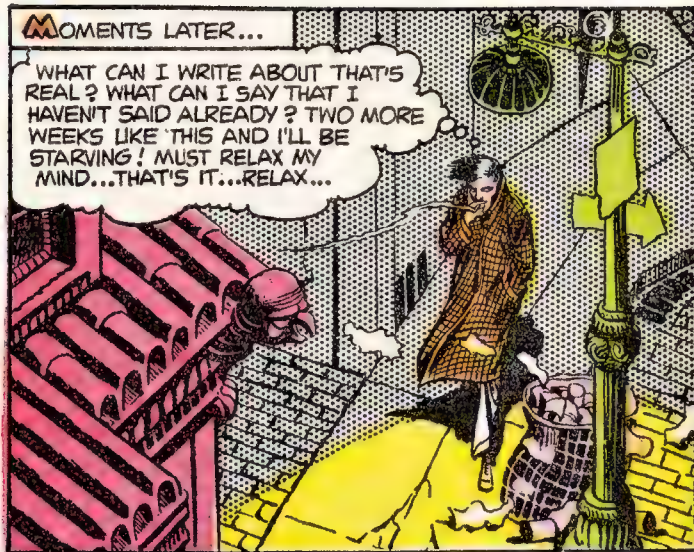
I...I DON'T KNOW, ALLEN. I'M TRYING-- BELIEVE ME I AM--BUT I JUST DON'T SEEM TO HAVE IT!

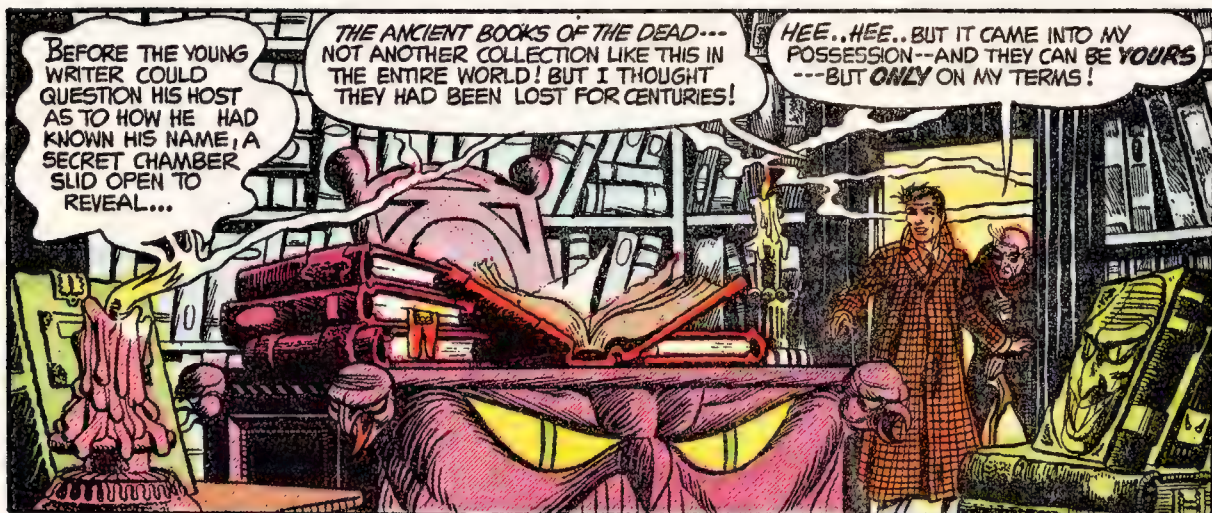


LOOK, OLD MAN...I'M NOT TRYING TO BE A SIMON LEGREE. JUST BRING IN SOMETHING **REALISTIC**, THAT'S ALL! YOU'RE STILL THE BEST WRITER I HAVE!

ALL RIGHT, ALLEN...I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO. I'VE GOT TO DO BETTER! I'VE GOT TO!







BEFORE THE YOUNG WRITER COULD QUESTION HIS HOST AS TO HOW HE HAD KNOWN HIS NAME, A SECRET CHAMBER SLID OPEN TO REVEAL...

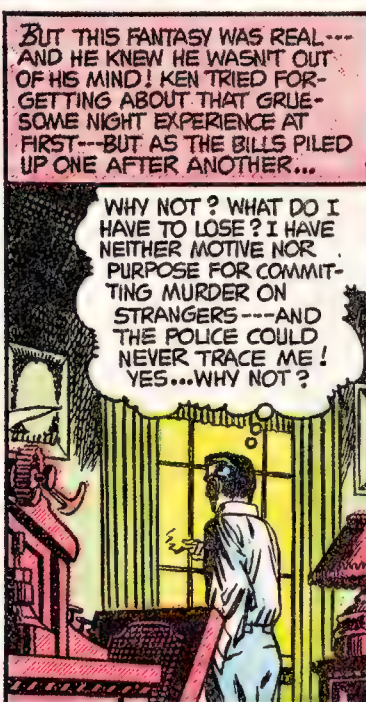
THE ANCIENT BOOKS OF THE DEAD... NOT ANOTHER COLLECTION LIKE THIS IN THE ENTIRE WORLD! BUT I THOUGHT THEY HAD BEEN LOST FOR CENTURIES!

HEE..HEE.. BUT IT CAME INTO MY POSSESSION--AND THEY CAN BE **YOURS** ---BUT **ONLY** ON MY TERMS!



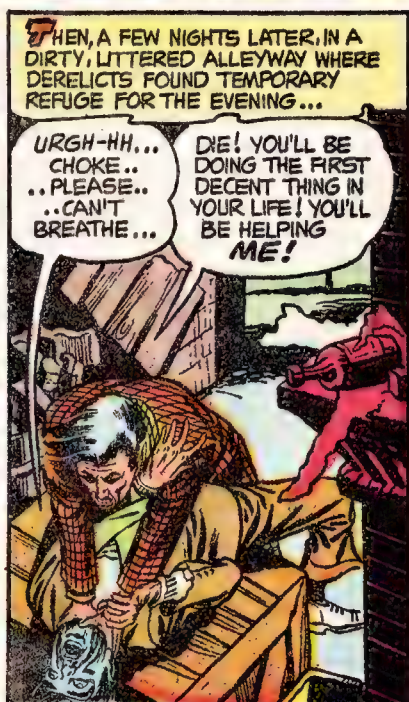
THINK OF IT---THE ENTIRE LIBRARY AT YOUR COMMAND. WHAT STORIES YOU COULD WRITE-- AND **ALL** WOULD BE REAL! ALL YOU NEED DO IS BRING ME A SUITABLE BODY HERE--**DEAD OR ALIVE!**

IT'S FANTASTIC! I'VE GONE MAD!



BUT THIS FANTASY WAS REAL--- AND HE KNEW HE WASN'T OUT OF HIS MIND! KEN TRIED FORGETTING ABOUT THAT GRUESOME NIGHT EXPERIENCE AT FIRST---BUT AS THE BILLS PILED UP ONE AFTER ANOTHER...

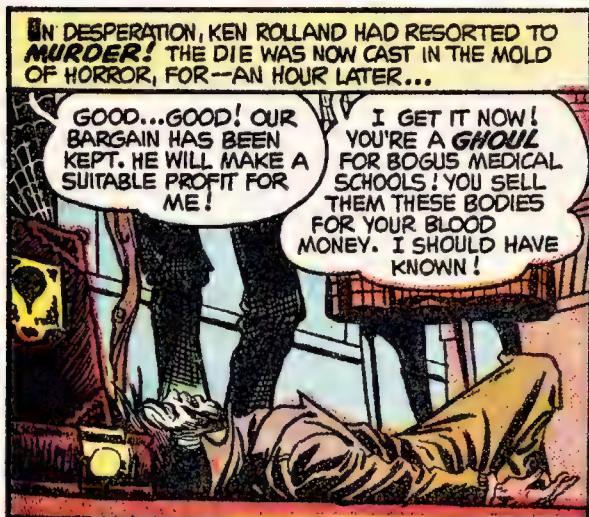
WHY NOT? WHAT DO I HAVE TO LOSE? I HAVE NEITHER MOTIVE NOR PURPOSE FOR COMMITTING MURDER ON STRANGERS---AND THE POLICE COULD NEVER TRACE ME! YES...WHY NOT?



THEN, A FEW NIGHTS LATER, IN A DIRTY, LITTERED ALLEYWAY WHERE DERELICTS FOUND TEMPORARY REFUGE FOR THE EVENING...

URGH--HH... CHOKES... PLEASE... CAN'T BREATHE...

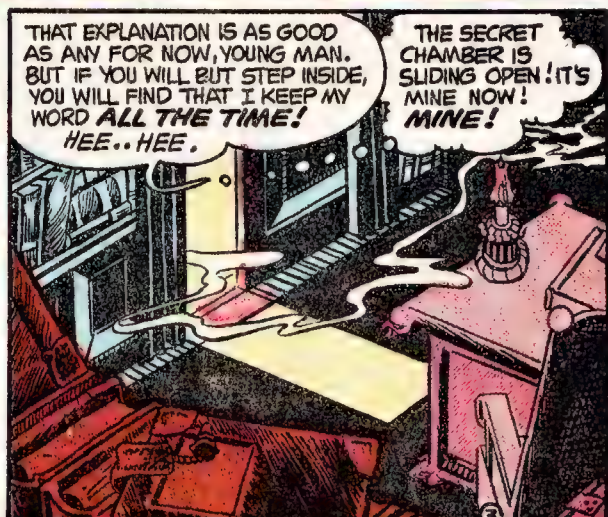
DIE! YOU'LL BE DOING THE FIRST DECENT THING IN YOUR LIFE! YOU'LL BE HELPING **ME!**



IN DESPERATION, KEN ROLLAND HAD RESORTED TO **MURDER!** THE DIE WAS NOW CAST IN THE MOLD OF HORROR, FOR--AN HOUR LATER...

GOOD...GOOD! OUR BARGAIN HAS BEEN KEPT. HE WILL MAKE A SUITABLE PROFIT FOR ME!

I GET IT NOW! YOU'RE A **GHOUL** FOR BOGUS MEDICAL SCHOOLS! YOU SELL THEM THESE BODIES FOR YOUR BLOOD MONEY. I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN!



THAT EXPLANATION IS AS GOOD AS ANY FOR NOW, YOUNG MAN. BUT IF YOU WILL BUT STEP INSIDE, YOU WILL FIND THAT I KEEP MY WORD **ALL THE TIME!** **HEE..HEE..**

THE SECRET CHAMBER IS SLIDING OPEN! IT'S **MINE** NOW! **MINE!**



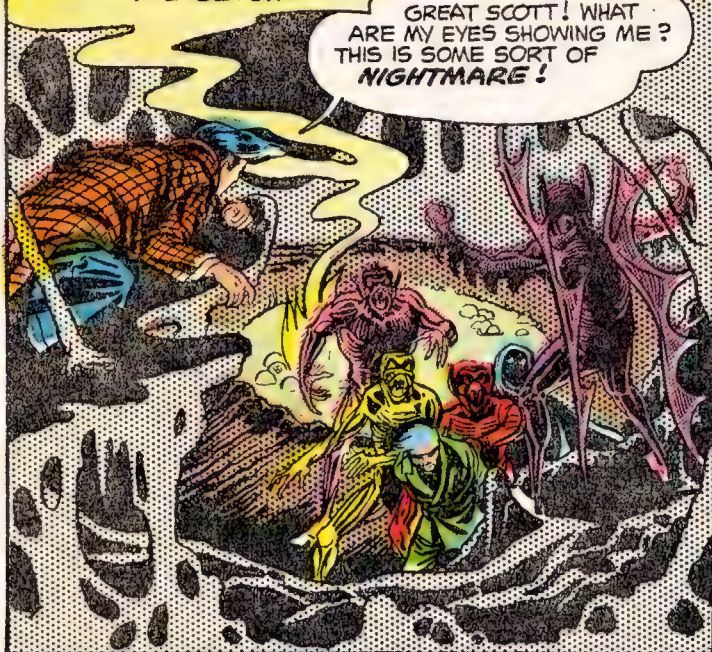
AND AS KEN ROLLAND LOST HIMSELF AMIDST THE HEAVY, DUSTY TOMES OF THE AGES, THE OUTLINES OF THE LIBRARY ABOUT HIM SEEMED TO MELT IN- TO NOTHINGNESS...

HEAD GETTING HEAVY
...SO DIZZY...

IN A BURST OF THUNDER, HE FELT HIMSELF PULLED UP TOWARDS THE HEAVENS---HURTLING ONWARD THROUGH THE VEIL OF TIME AND SPACE. CACKLING LAUGHTER AROSE ALL ABOUT HIM--AND THEN--HE OPENED HIS EYES TO FIND HIMSELF IN---

THE BEYOND!

GREAT SCOTT! WHAT ARE MY EYES SHOWING ME? THIS IS SOME SORT OF NIGHTMARE!



BUT THE ANGUISHED SHRIEKS OF A SOUL IN TORMENT PROVED BEYOND A DOUBT THAT HE WAS NOW SEEING WHAT NO OTHER MORTAL BEFORE HIM HAD EXPERIENCED.

TEAR OUT HIS HEART! GIVE THIS SOUL THE TORTURE OF ALL ETERNITY! TO ME, MY BROTHERS! WE WILL ENJOY THIS MEAL!

WAIT TILL FARGO SEES THE STORY I'M GOING TO WRITE! THIS IS SENSATIONAL!



THUS BEGAN THE SERIES OF HORRIBLE MURDERS THAT GRIPPED A TERRORIZED CITY. KEN ROLLAND STRUCK SWIFTLY AND WITHOUT A QUALM. HE WAS ON HIS WAY TO SUCCESS AND FAME!



ARRGHHHHHHH!

SCREAM ALL YOU WANT! YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY!

AND WITH EACH BODY DELIVERED TO THE OLD MAN KEN ROLLAND WAS REWARDED WITH FURTHER VISITS INTO THE EERIE HALF-WORLD OF HORRORS!



STRANGE HOW QUICKLY I'M ABLE TO GET ABOUT IN THIS TERRIBLE PLACE! HELLO--I SEEM TO BE APPROACHING A PACK OF VAMPIRES!

BEHOLD! A TASTY MORSEL FOR OUR APPETITES!

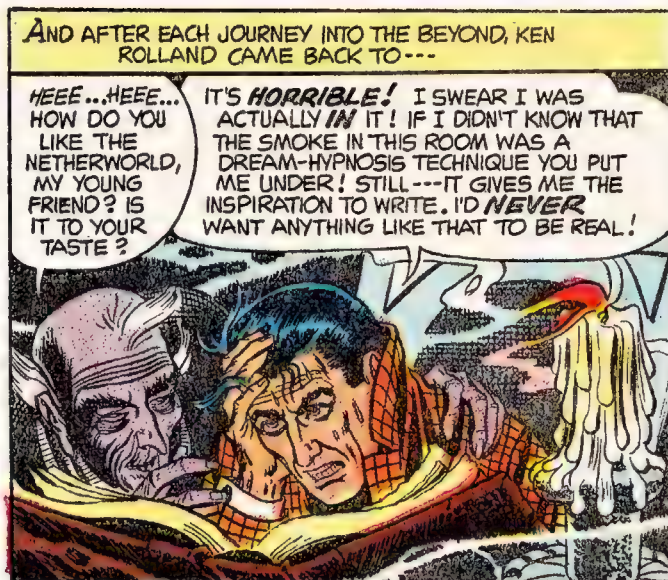
STAY BACK, YOU MONSTROUS HORRORS! DON'T COME NEAR ME!





HE IS AN UNTOUCHABLE! A MORTAL SOUL WHO IS ALIVE! AIIIEEEE-- WE CANNOT TEAR HIM INTO PIECES YET! BUT WE SHALL BIDE OUR TIME.

WHEW! THE NEARNESS OF THEM STILL MAKES ME WEAK! WHAT TERRIBLE FACES--- THOSE EYES...MUST PLACE THEM DOWN ON MY PAD AT ONCE SO THAT I WON'T FORGET!



HEEE...HEEE... HOW DO YOU LIKE THE NETHERWORLD, MY YOUNG FRIEND? IS IT TO YOUR TASTE?

IT'S **HORRIBLE!** I SWEAR I WAS ACTUALLY *IN* IT! IF I DIDN'T KNOW THAT THE SMOKE IN THIS ROOM WAS A DREAM-HYPNOSIS TECHNIQUE YOU PUT ME UNDER! STILL---IT GIVES ME THE INSPIRATION TO WRITE. I'D **NEVER** WANT ANYTHING LIKE THAT TO BE REAL!



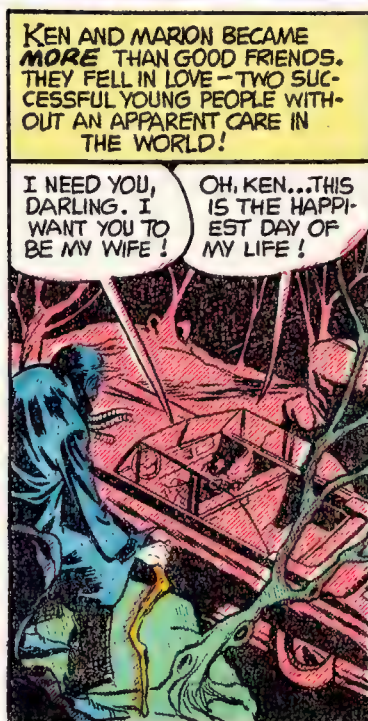
SO BOOK SUCCESS FOLLOWED BOOK SUCCESS, AND SOON KEN ROLLAND BECAME FAMOUS! EACH RAPIDLY-FILLING VOLUME ON HIS LIBRARY-SHELF PORTRAYED A WORLD OF TERROR!



BUT WRITING ABOUT TERROR AND HORROR-SUPREME MADE MONEY FOR HIM--AND KEN CONTINUED WRITING, MURDERING, WRITING --- UNTIL HIS NAME RANKED WITH THE WORLD'S GREATEST HORROR-MASTERS. THEN ONE DAY AT A COCKTAIL PARTY...

I WANT YOU TO MEET MARION WELLES, THE SINGER!

SO **YOU'RE** KEN ROLLAND! I'VE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT YOU! I HOPE WE'LL BE GOOD FRIENDS!



KEN AND MARION BECAME **MORE** THAN GOOD FRIENDS. THEY FELL IN LOVE--TWO SUCCESSFUL YOUNG PEOPLE WITHOUT AN APPARENT CARE IN THE WORLD!

I NEED YOU, DARLING. I WANT YOU TO BE MY WIFE!

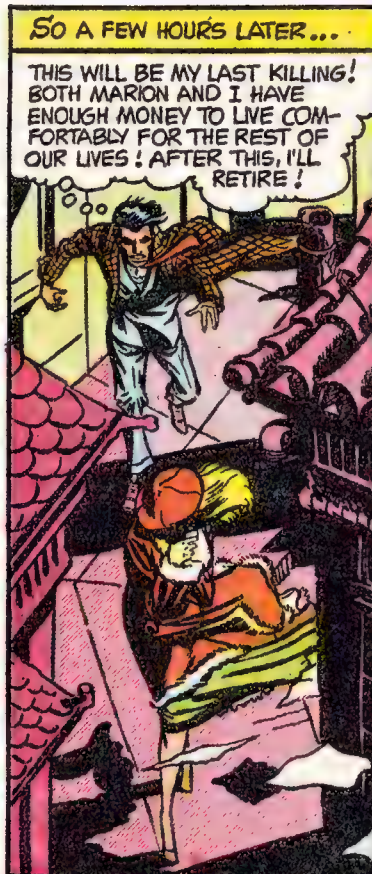
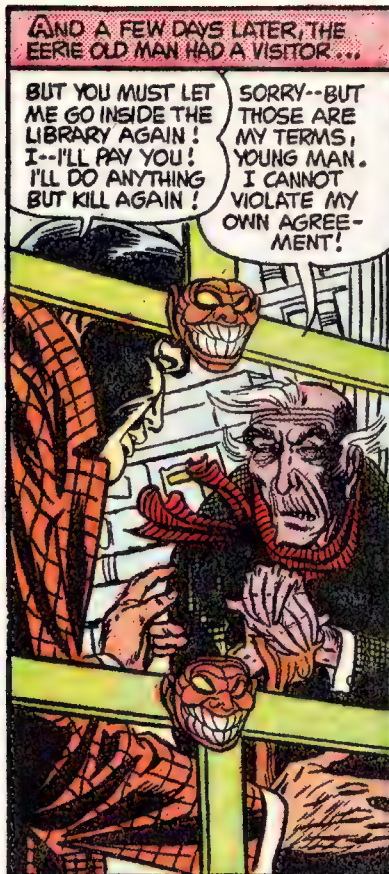
OH, KEN...THIS IS THE HAPPIEST DAY OF MY LIFE!

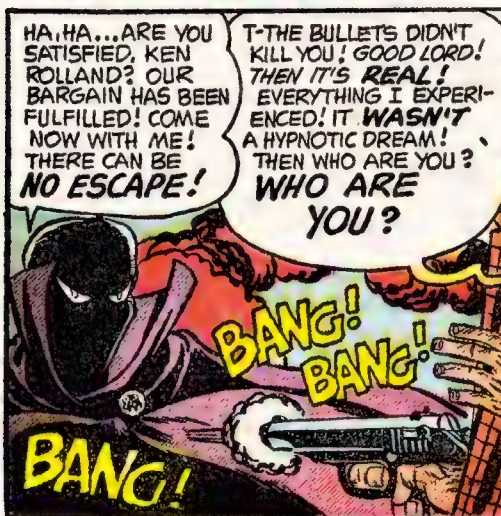
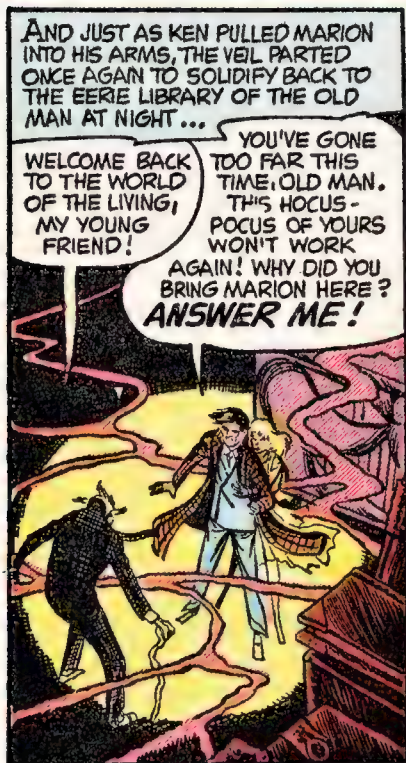
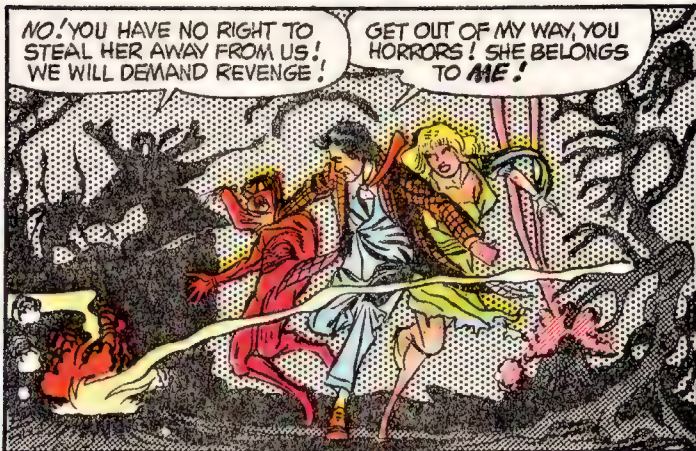
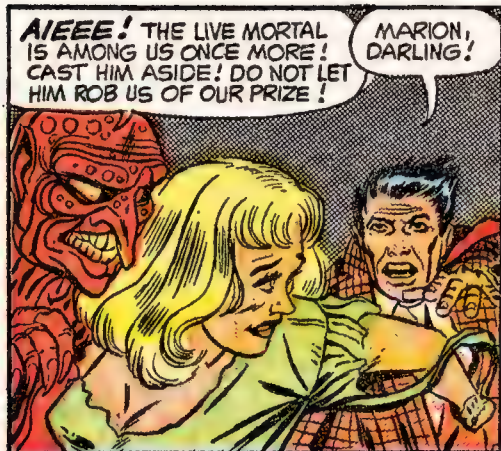


BUT THE DAY THEY WERE MARRIED, KEN STOPPED MURDERING OR GOING TO THE LIBRARY OF THE OLD MAN. AND FROM THAT DAY ON, HE WAS A FAILURE...

YOU MUST TRY TO GET SOME SLEEP, DEAR. YOU'LL WRITE WELL TOMORROW, I **KNOW** IT!

YOU KNOW **NOTHING!** MARION. I--I CAN'T ESCAPE! NO! THERE'S ONLY **ONE** OTHER WAY!





IT ALL STARTED OUT AS A HILARIOUS PRANK... THIS COLLEGE FRATERNITY INITIATION STAGED BY REX CHANDLER, THE MOST IRREPRESSIBLE PRACTICAL JOKER ON THE CAMPUS. DESIGNED TO TEST THE COURAGE OF THREE UNDERCLASSMEN, THIS UNIQUE HAZING CAME CLOSE TO MAKING EVERYONE...

DIE LAUGHING!



G-GOOD GOD! DO...DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?

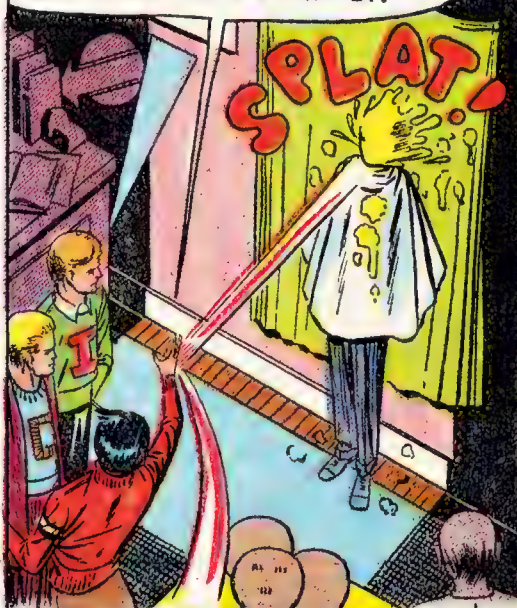
I-I'M CLEARING OUT! THIS JOKE OF CHANDLER'S IS TOO GRISLY FOR MY TASTE!

THE INITIATION WAS PROVING AN IMMENSE SUCCESS... AT LEAST TO REX CHANDLER'S WAY OF THINKING. A LITTLE ROUGH ON THE PLEDGES, PERHAPS, BUT THE SORT OF *Thing* REX DELIGHTED IN...



AND NOW, FOLKS, THE GREATEST PITCHING ARM IN OUR COLLEGE'S HISTORY WILL DEMONSTRATE THE PROPER METHOD FOR THROWING A CUSTARD PIE!

THREE LUSTY CHEERS FOR REX CHANDLER! THAT WAS A BETTER CURVE THAN THE ONE I THREW TO RETIRE THE SIDE IN THE HOTCHKISS GAME! **THIS** ONE WAS A **HIT** AS WELL AS A STRIKEOUT!



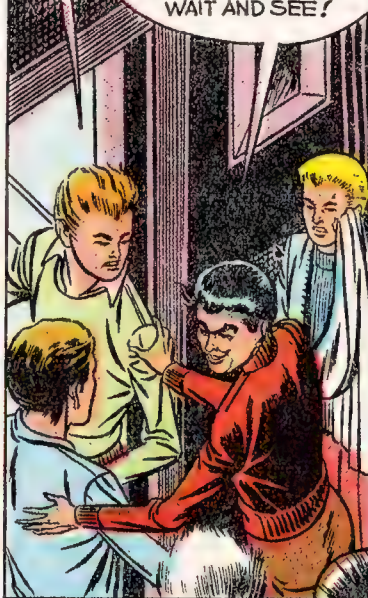
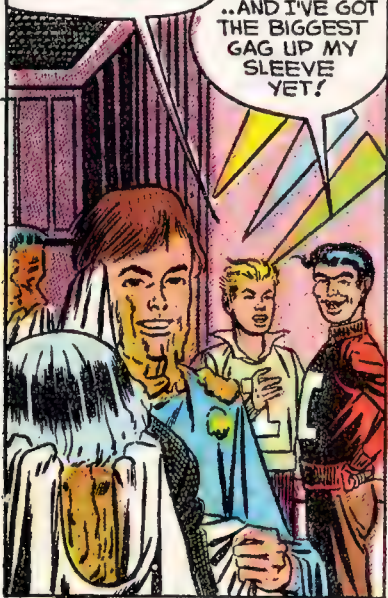
DON'T YOU THINK WE'VE HAD ENOUGH FUN WITH THESE GUYS, REX? LET'S CALL OFF THE REST OF THE HAZING AND SWEAR 'EM IN AS MEMBERS OF DELTA GAMMA...

NOT ON YOUR LIFE! I'M IN CHARGE OF THE INITIATION...AND I'VE GOT THE BIGGEST GAG UP MY SLEEVE YET!

B-BUT YOU'VE BEEN AWFULLY ROUGH ON THESE...

C'MON, YOU SOB-SISTERS...CLEAR OUT! I GOTTA BRIEF THE WOULD-BE DELTA GAMMAS ON THE **LAST** STEP... IT'LL BE THE BEST EVER! YOU JUST WAIT AND SEE!

YOU THREE PLEDGES HAVE PROVEN YOUR LOYALTY AND INTELLIGENCE... BUT I'M STILL NOT SURE OF YOUR **COURAGE!** AND SO TONIGHT, WE'LL TEST **THAT!** OVER AT THE HAWKINS HOUSE... THE ONE FOLKS SAY IS **HAUNTED!** I'VE MADE A LOT OF PREPARATIONS... HEH HEH...THAT'LL **SLAY** YOU!



FOR THE NEXT HOUR, REX INSTRUCTED THE THREE UNDERCLASSMEN IN THE LAST STAGE OF THEIR INITIATION. THEN, THAT SAME NIGHT...

THERE SHE IS, BOYS... A REAL HUMDINGER! I KNOW YOU ALL SNEER AT THE IDEA OF A HOUSE ACTUALLY BEING **HAUNTED**, BUT THIS ONE... HEH HEH... THERE'S SOME *Thing* ABOUT IT TO TURN YOUR BLOOD COLD!



L-LOOK, CHANDLER... YOU'RE GOING ABOUT THIS *Thing* WITH ALMOST SADISTIC JOY! THE OTHER BOYS AND I ARE SATISFIED THAT THE PLEDGES...

I'M IN CHARGE, KELSEY...IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE WAY I'M RUNNING THINGS YOU CAN RESIGN FROM DELTA GAMMA, SEE?



I PUT A LOT OF TIME AND THOUGHT INTO THIS INITIATION...ESPECIALLY THIS LAST PART! IT'LL PROVE ONCE AND FOR ALL WHETHER OUR NEWEST MEMBERS HAVE **GUTS!** ARKWRIGHT...GRAB THIS LANTERN AND GET GOING!

Y-YES SIR...

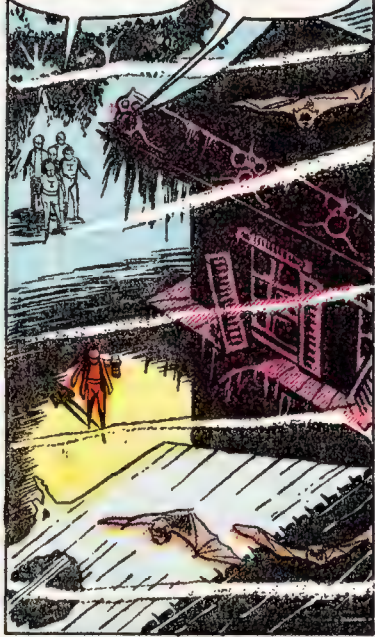


WAVE THAT LANTERN AT US FROM THE FIRST FLOOR LANDING..THE SECOND FLOOR..AND THE ATTIC WINDOW! THEN JUST COOL YOUR HEELS 'TIL I COME UPSTAIRS TO GET YOU! OKAY... LET'S START THE BALL ROLLING!



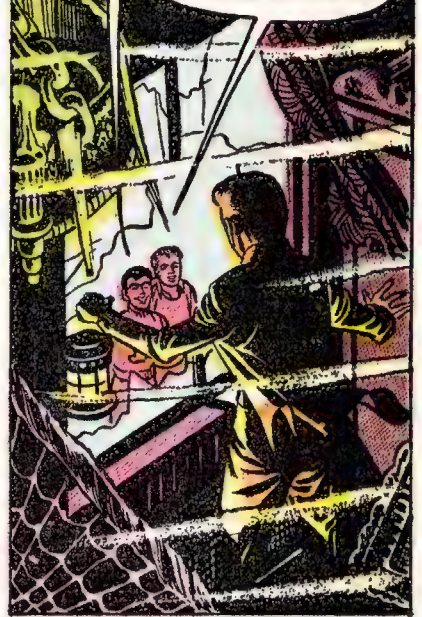
DON'T YOU THINK THIS IS KIND OF CHILDISH, REX ... THIS HAUNTED HOUSE BLARNEY? WE DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU TOLD THESE THREE KIDS.. BUT THEY'RE SCARED STIFF...

NOTHING COMPARED TO THE STATE THEY'LL BE IN, IN A COUPLA MINUTES FROM NOW! JUST..HEE HEE..WAIT AND SEE!



I SPENT HOURS FIXING UP THIS JOINT AND RIGGING UP A MESS OF SURPRISES FOR THE BOYS! THAT **ATTIC**... HEH HEH... IT'LL **KILL 'EM!**

LIGHT'S ON IN THE HOUSE... IT'S ARKWRIGHT WAVING HIS LANTERN FROM THE FIRST FLOOR LANDING! G-GOOD GOSH... HE LOOKS SCARED TO DEATH!



THERE HE IS AGAIN.. AT THE SECOND FLOOR LANDING! LOOK AT HIS FACE ... HE'S SHAKING AS IF HE'S SEEN A GHOST! I..I HOPE THIS STUNT DOESN'T BACK-FIRE, CHANDLER..WE'RE HOLDING **YOU** RESPONSIBLE!



YOU GUYS ARE TOO WISHY-WASHY FOR MY TASTE... WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE TAKING **MEN** INTO DELTA GAMMA, NOT SCHOOL-BOYS! A LITTLE FRIGHT ISN'T GONNA HURT 'EM AND...

IT'S THREE MINUTES SINCE WE LAST SAW ARKWRIGHT... AND IT DOESN'T TAKE **THAT** LONG TO GO FROM THE SECOND FLOOR TO THE ATTIC!



ARKWRIGHT'S DECIDED TO GET CUTE, HAS HE? THINKS HE'LL SCARE **ME** A BIT, EH? PROBABLY SITTING IN THE ATTIC AND WAITING TO YELL **BOO** WHEN I COME AFTER HIM! HMM... WE'LL JUST CHANGE THE SCHEDULE A BIT! CHAVEZ... COME ARUNNING!



SUPPOSE WE SPIKE ARKWRIGHT'S LITTLE SCHEME AND HAVE **YOU** GO UP NEXT, CHAVEZ! THIS WAY... IF ARKY'S GOT SOME PLAN UP HIS SLEEVE, HE'LL BE SPRINGING IT ON **YOU!** WHO KNOWS... THIS MAY BE EVEN A BIGGER LAUGH THAN WHAT I DOPED OUT!

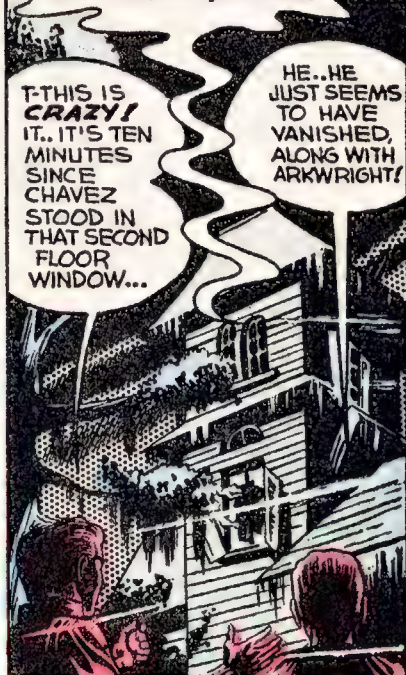


D-DON'T YOU THINK IT'D BE BETTER TO FIND OUT IF ARKWRIGHT IS ALL RIGHT? H-HE MIGHT'VE FALLEN DOWN THOSE RICKETY STAIRS, OR...

TURNING YELLOW, CHAVEZ? GET INTO THAT HOUSE BEFORE I COUNT TEN... OR EVERYONE ON THE CAMPUS 'LL KNOW YOU'RE CHICKEN!



SLOWLY HIS FACE REFLECTING A HORRIBLE FEAR, UNDER-CLASSMAN CHAVEZ DISAPPEARED INTO THE HOUSE. TWICE HIS FLASH-LIGHT BLINKED, THEN...



T-THIS IS **CRAZY!** IT.. IT'S TEN MINUTES SINCE CHAVEZ STOOD IN THAT SECOND FLOOR WINDOW...

HE..HE JUST SEEMS TO HAVE VANISHED, ALONG WITH ARKWRIGHT!

VANISHED, MY EYE! THEY'RE **YELLOW**, THAT'S WHAT! GOT TO THE SECOND FLOOR, THEN TURNED AROUND AND CAME BACK DOWNSTAIRS! THEY'RE PROBABLY CROUCHING BY THE FRONT ENTRANCE, SHAKING IN THEIR BOOTS! BUT THEY WON'T GET AWAY WITH IT...**BREEN, CHERE!**

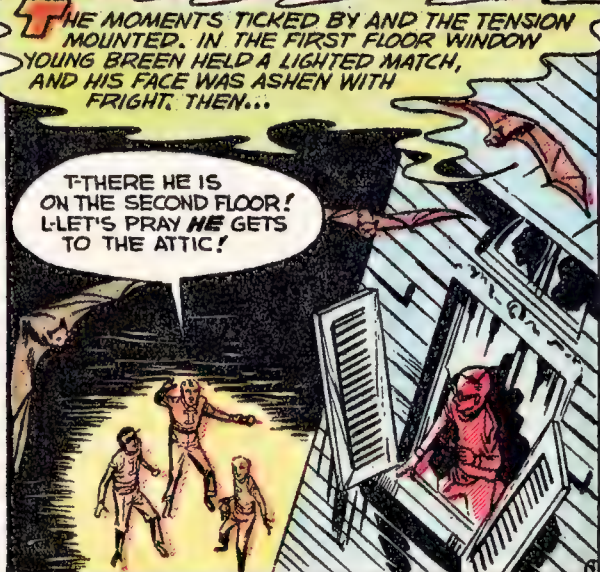


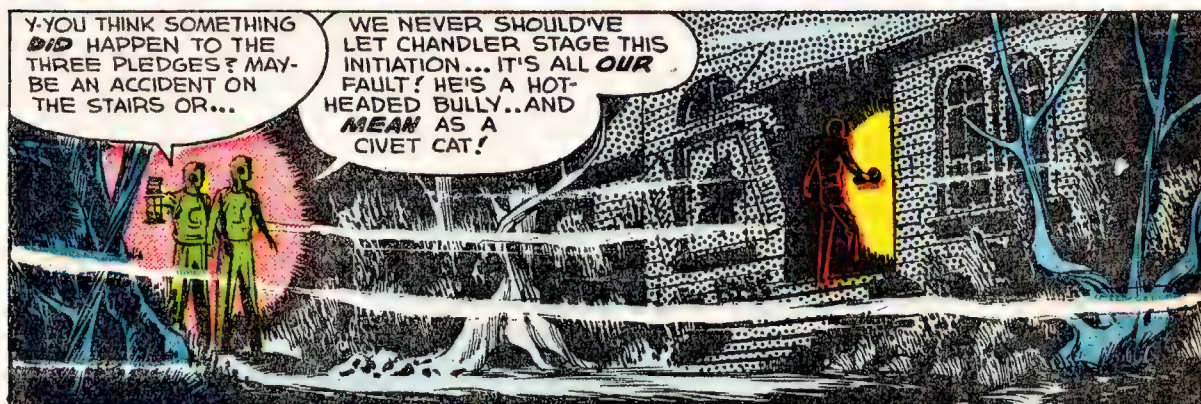
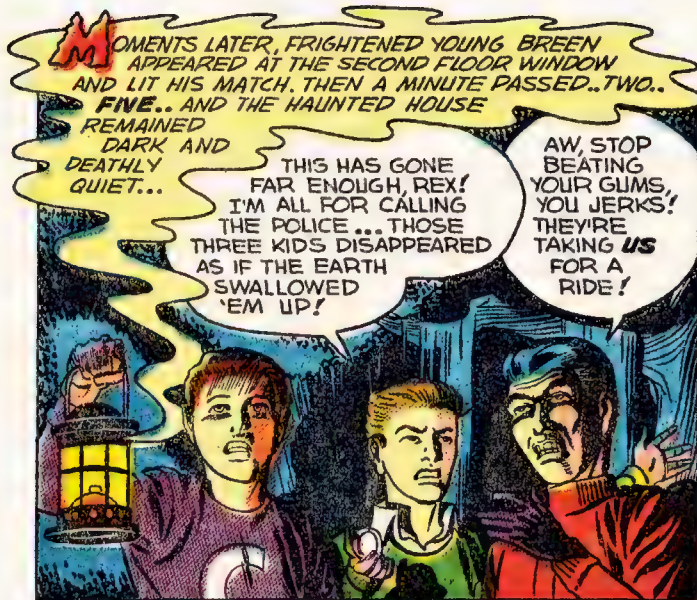
YOU GO IN THERE AND TELL ARKWRIGHT AND CHAVEZ THAT I WANTA SEE **THREE** FACES IN THAT ATTIC WINDOW! IF I DON'T, NONE OF YOU GETS INTO DELTA GAMMA THIS YEAR OR **EVER!** NOW GET MOVING!



THE MOMENTS TICKED BY AND THE TENSION MOUNTED. IN THE FIRST FLOOR WINDOW YOUNG BREEN HELD A LIGHTED MATCH, AND HIS FACE WAS ASHEN WITH FRIGHT. THEN...

T-THERE HE IS ON THE SECOND FLOOR! L-LET'S PRAY **HE** GETS TO THE ATTIC!







I-I DON'T LIKE THAT INSANE LAUGH OF HIS. WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE HE HID UP IN THAT ATTIC TO SCARE THE PLEDGES?

W-WHAT-EVER IT IS, WE'LL SOON KNOW!



THE LAUGH WOULD REALLY BE ON CHANDLER IF THOSE THREE UNDERCLASSMEN ARE WAITING TO JUMP HIM AND GIVE HIM THE BEATING OF HIS LIFE! HE'S BEEN RIDING THEM UNMERCIFULLY EVER SINCE THIS HAZING STARTED... MAYBE THIS IS THEIR METHOD OF GETTING REVENGE!

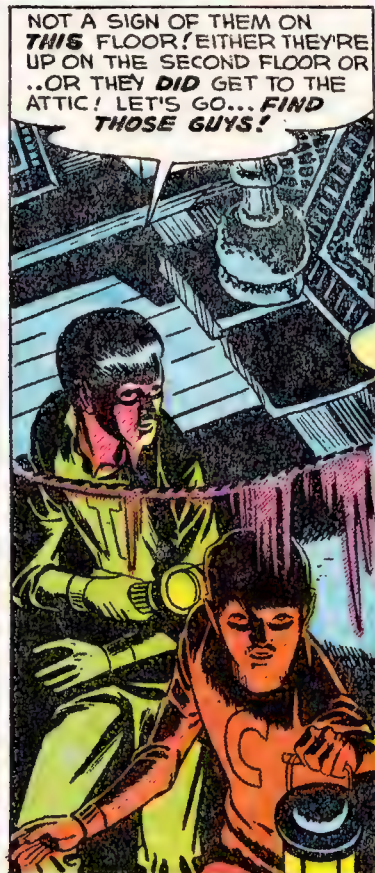


THE MINUTES STRETCHED INTERMINABLY FOR THOSE WAITING OUTSIDE...

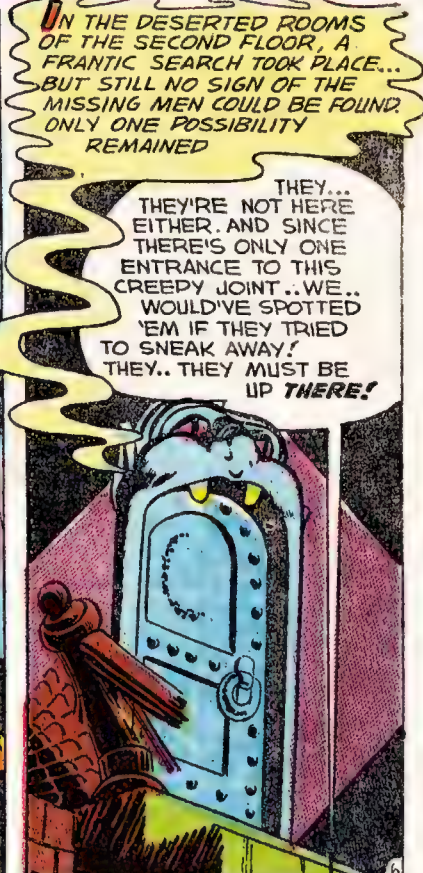
COME ON... CHANDLER'S BEEN GONE TOO LONG! EITHER THIS IS A JOKE ON **US**...OR SOMETHING **HAS** HAPPENED! ALL FOUR OF 'EM HAVE DISAPPEARED!



YOU SEARCH THE ROOMS OFF TO THIS SIDE, WHILE I GO OVER THE BACK OF THE HOUSE WITH A FINE-TOOTH COMB. IF THIS IS REX'S IDEA OF A JOKE ON THE FRAT BROTHERS, I'M GOING TO HAVE HIM BROUGHT UP ON CHARGES! START LOOKING...THIS PRANK'S GONE FAR ENOUGH!

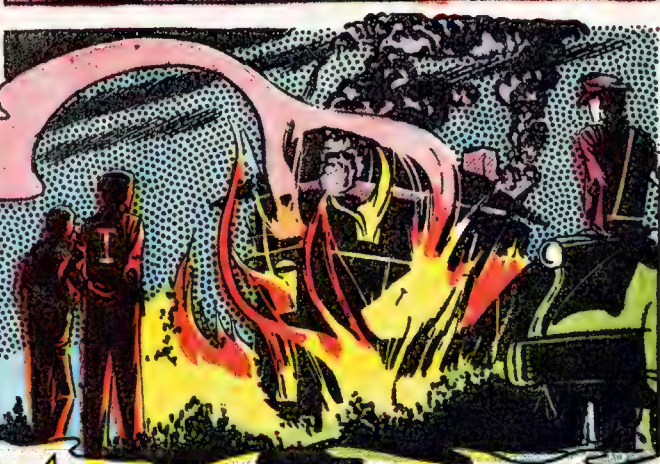
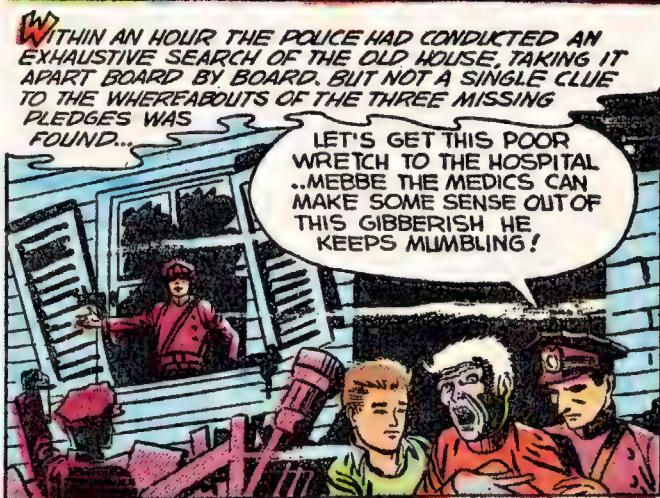
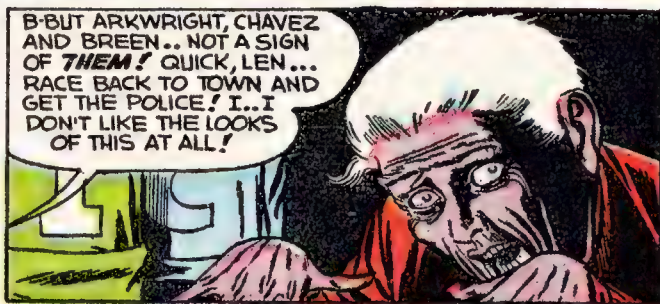
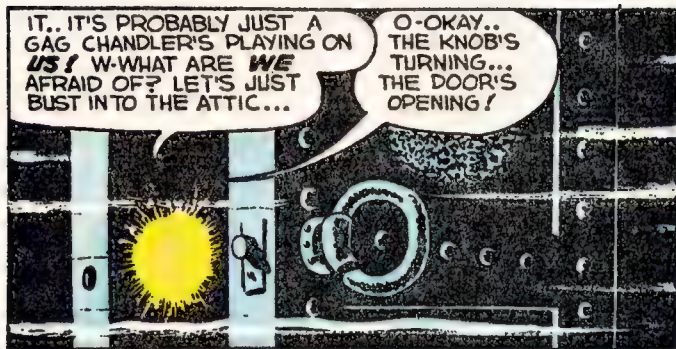


NOT A SIGN OF THEM ON **THIS** FLOOR! EITHER THEY'RE UP ON THE SECOND FLOOR OR...OR THEY **DID** GET TO THE ATTIC! LET'S GO... **FIND THOSE GUYS!**



IN THE DESERTED ROOMS OF THE SECOND FLOOR, A FRANTIC SEARCH TOOK PLACE... BUT STILL NO SIGN OF THE MISSING MEN COULD BE FOUND. ONLY ONE POSSIBILITY REMAINED

THEY... THEY'RE NOT HERE EITHER. AND SINCE THERE'S ONLY ONE ENTRANCE TO THIS CREEPY JOINT..WE.. WOULD'VE SPOTTED 'EM IF THEY TRIED TO SNEAK AWAY! THEY.. THEY MUST BE UP **THERE!**



ARKWRIGHT, CHAVEZ AND BREEN? THEY HAVE NEVER BEEN SEEN AGAIN! WHAT STRANGE AND HORRIBLE FATE ENGULFED THEM WILL PROBABLY NEVER BE KNOWN! JUST ONE OF THOSE Things, I IMAGINE! WHAT DO YOU THINK? *The Thing*

REX CHANDLER DIED THE NEXT DAY OF EXTREME SHOCK, THE DOCTORS AGREED! AND THE GRUESOME SIGHT WHICH GREETED HIM WHEN HE ENTERED THAT ATTIC WILL NEVER BE KNOWN.. BECAUSE THE HOUSE WAS BURNT DOWN A SHORT TIME LATER, BY ORDER OF THE BEWILDERED AUTHORITIES!

WELCOME ONCE AGAIN, DEAR READERS. THIS MONTH I HAVE A JUICY TID-BIT ESPECIALLY PREPARED FOR YOU! IT CONCERNS A HARD-BITTEN OLD PROSPECTOR WHO LOVED GOLD SO MUCH THAT--WELL...HE WAS WILLING TO WAIT FIFTEEN YEARS TO CLAIM IT. AND WHOSE GOLD WAS IT? REMEMBER THAT WEIRD CASTLE ON THE HILL THAT SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED ONE NIGHT IN A FLASH OF LIGHTNING? WELL...HEH, HEH...COME WITH ME TO MY LIBRARY OF HORROR AS I RELATE TO YOU ALL ABOUT---

AVERY and the GOBLINS

AS TOLD BY

The Thing

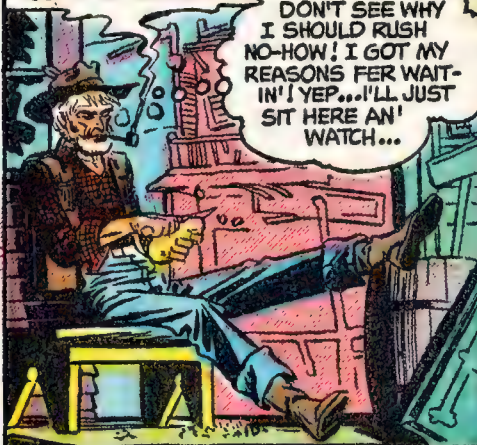
I'VE WAITED FIFTEEN YEARS TO GET THE TREASURE OF THE GOBLINS AND I'M NOT GOING TO BE STOPPED NOW!

WE WELCOME ANY HUMAN WHO WISHES TO STEAL OUR TREASURE. HUMAN FLESH IS A DELICACY WITH US!



AVERY CALHOUN WAS THE DETERMINED SORT. HE COULD AFFORD TO WAIT, HE THOUGHT. FOR FIFTEEN YEARS HE'D DONE IT--HERE IN DESERTED MIDVALE, A GHOST-TOWN LONELY AND UNPLEASANT, AND HE COULD HOLD OUT JUST A BIT LONGER.

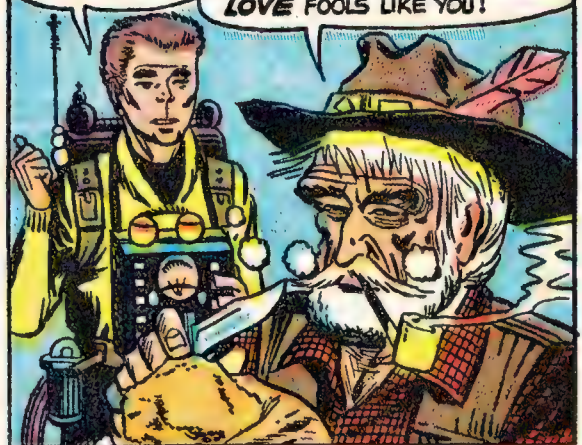
DON'T SEE WHY I SHOULD RUSH NO-HOW! I GOT MY REASONS FER WAIT-IN! YEP...I'LL JUST SIT HERE AN' WATCH...

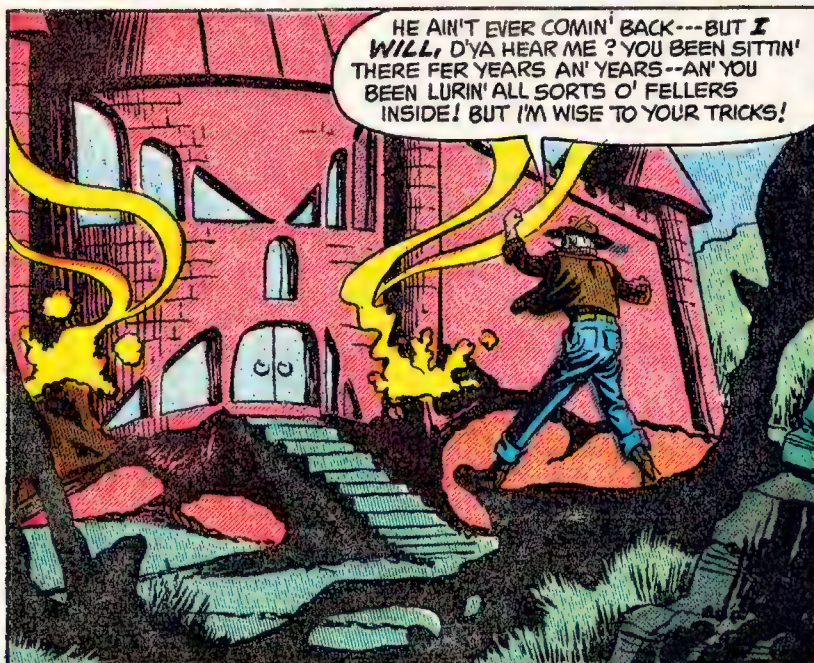
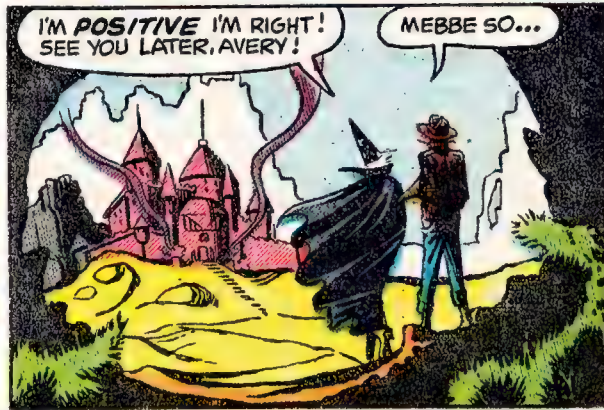
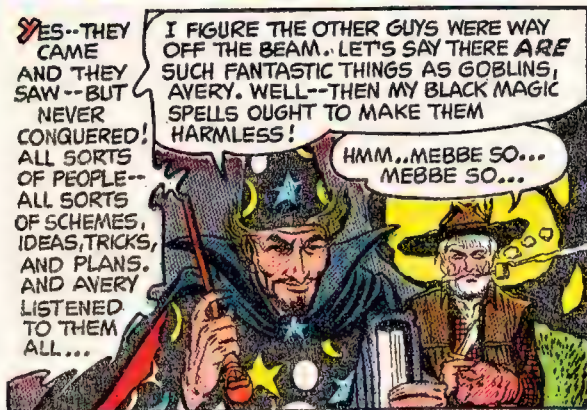
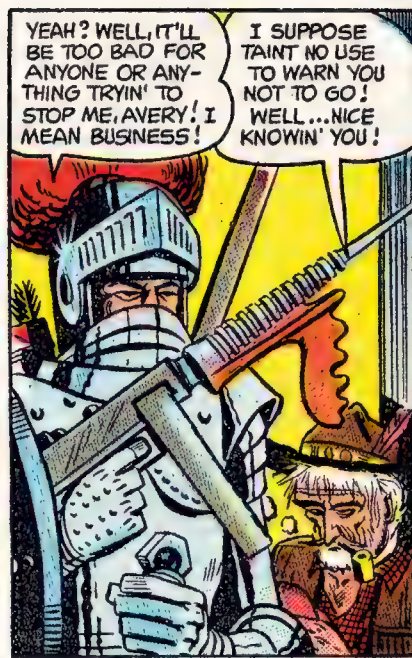
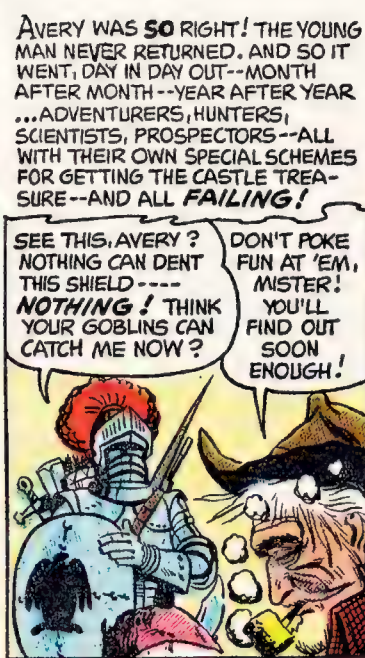
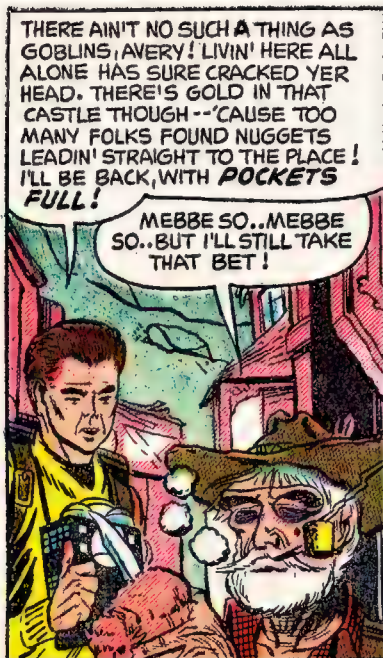


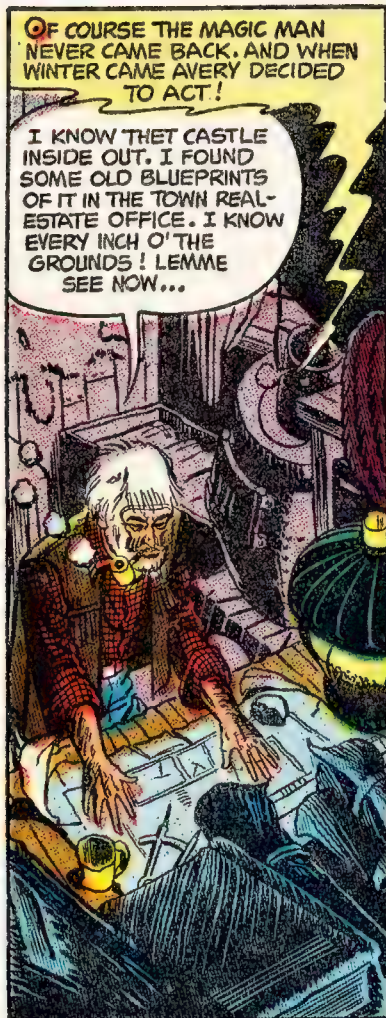
BECAUSE AVERY, YOU SEE, WAS A VERY SHREWD, CAUTIOUS CUSS. HE SAW HUNTERS COME AND GO--AND NO ONE EVER CAME BACK FROM THE BLACK CASTLE ON THE HILL! ONE DAY, FOR EXAMPLE..

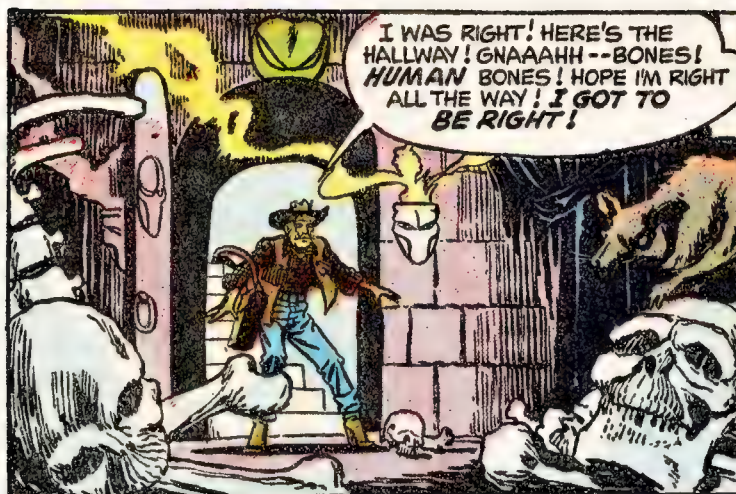
YOU JUST GONNA SIT THERE ALL YOUR LIFE, AVERY? DON'T YOU HAVE THE GUTS TO GET THAT THERE TREASURE?

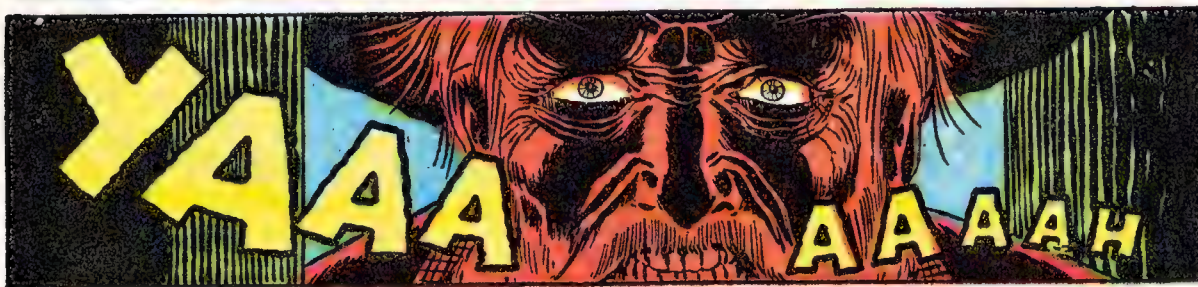
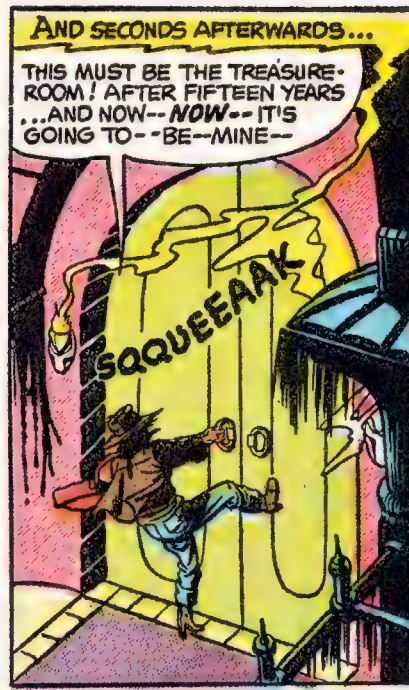
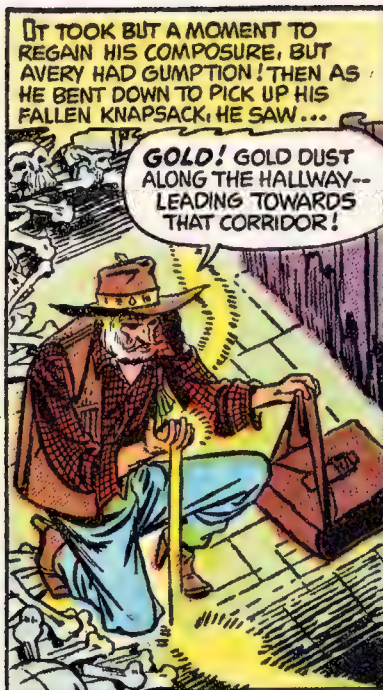
I SURE DO, YOUNG MAN. BUT I'LL BET YOU A WHOLE YEAR'S SUPPLY O' VITTLES THEM SCIENTIFIC GADGETS AIN'T GONNA HELP YOU NONE AT ALL! THEM GOBLINS JUST LOVE FOOLS LIKE YOU!

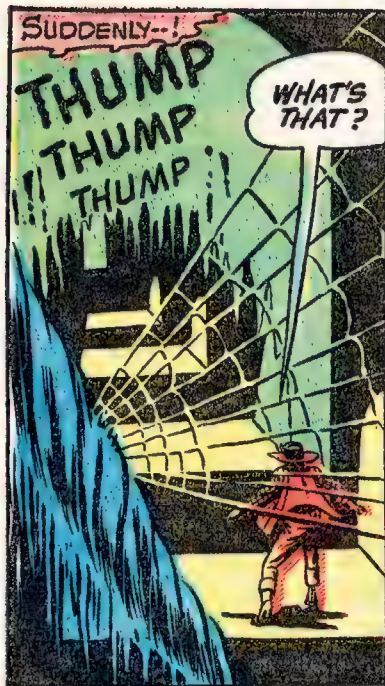












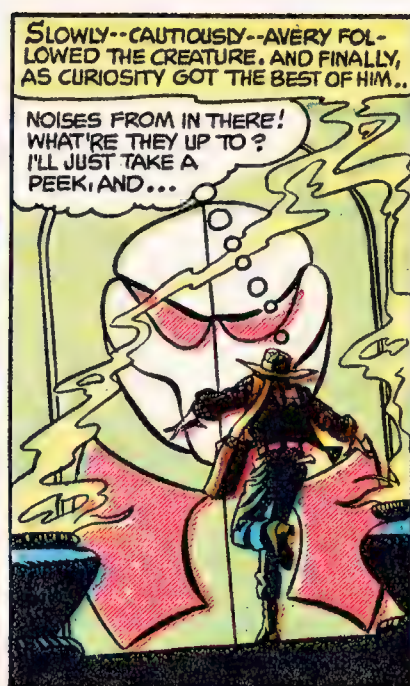
SUDDENLY--!!
**THUMP
THUMP
THUMP**

WHAT'S
THAT?



ARRGHHH-H
...HA, HA, HA
...FOOD!

UGH-HH...THOSE
SHARP FANGS...!



SLOWLY--CAUTIOUSLY--AVERY FOL-
LOWED THE CREATURE, AND FINALLY,
AS CURIOSITY GOT THE BEST OF HIM..

NOISES FROM IN THERE!
WHAT'RE THEY UP TO?
I'LL JUST TAKE A
PEEK, AND...

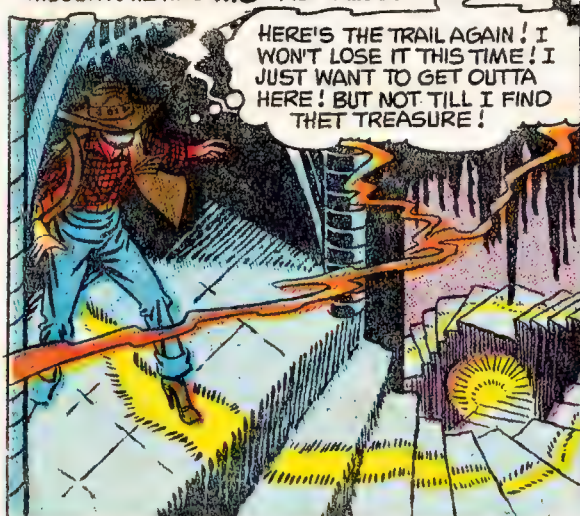


OH NO---
N-NO!

EAT--DRINK--LET US BE MERRY! FOR THERE
IS EVER A CONSTANT SUPPLY OF **FOOD**!
HA, HA ...

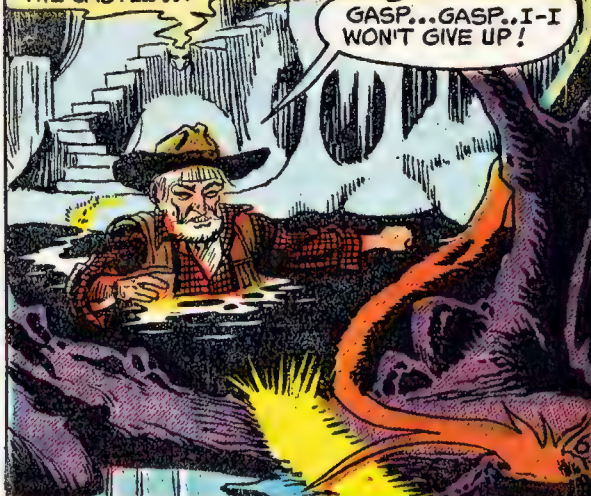
WHAT DELICIOUS, SWEET MEAT!
WHAT TENDER FLESH! WHAT
SUCCULENT BONES!

FOR A WHILE AVERY GOT VERY SICK. THEN, WHEN HE
RECOVERED, HE SET OUT IN GRIM PURSUIT. LET THE
GOBLINS KEEP TO THEIR OWN GRUESOME TASK, HE
THOUGHT. HE HAD **HIS** TASK ALSO!

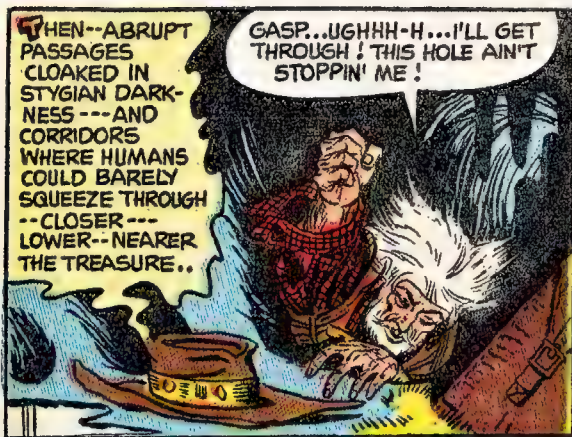


HERE'S THE TRAIL AGAIN! I
WON'T LOSE IT THIS TIME! I
JUST WANT TO GET OUTTA
HERE! BUT NOT TILL I FIND
THET TREASURE!

NOW BEGAN A JOURNEY INTO THE VERY DEPTHS OF
HELL! WEIRD, MUSTY CAVERNS, OOZING CESSPOOLS
OF FILTH, TORTUROUS LABYRINTHS --ALL LEADING
DOWN LOWER AND LOWER INTO THE BOWELS OF
THE CASTLE ...

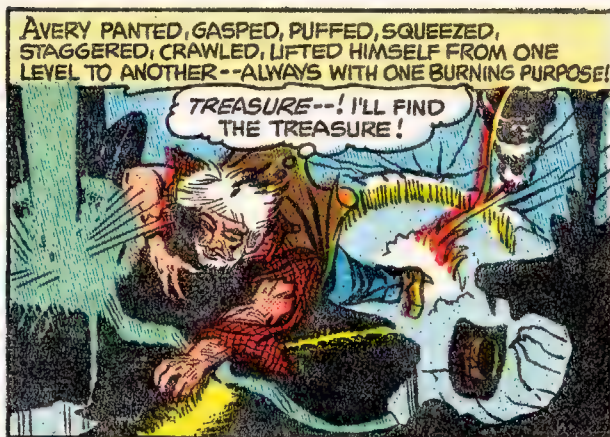


GASP...GASP...I-I
WON'T GIVE UP!



THEN--ABRUPT
PASSAGES
CLOAKED IN
STYGIAN DARK-
NESS---AND
CORRIDORS
WHERE HUMANS
COULD BARELY
SQUEEZE THROUGH
--CLOSER---
LOWER-- NEARER
THE TREASURE..

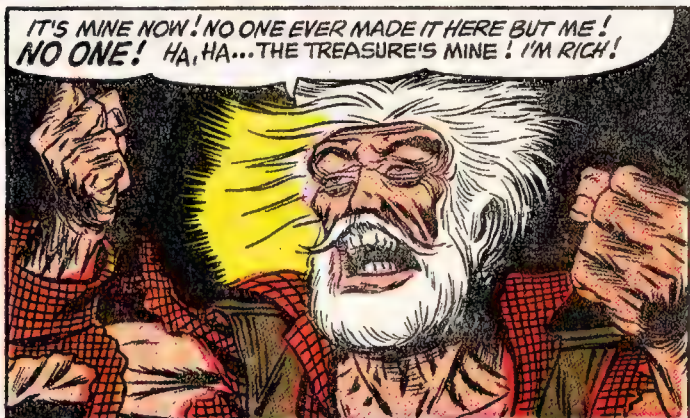
GASP...UGH-H-H...I'LL GET
THROUGH! THIS HOLE AIN'T
STOPPIN' ME!



AVERY PANTED, GASPED, PUFFED, SQUEEZED,
STAGGERED, CRAWLED, LIFTED HIMSELF FROM ONE
LEVEL TO ANOTHER--ALWAYS WITH ONE BURNING PURPOSE!

TREASURE--! I'LL FIND
THE TREASURE!

AND THEN --HE CAME TO THE CASTLE CRYPT
--THE TREASURE ROOM OF THE GOBLINS!
THIS WAS AVERY'S MOMENT--THE MOMENT
HE HAD WAITED FOR **FIFTEEN YEARS!**



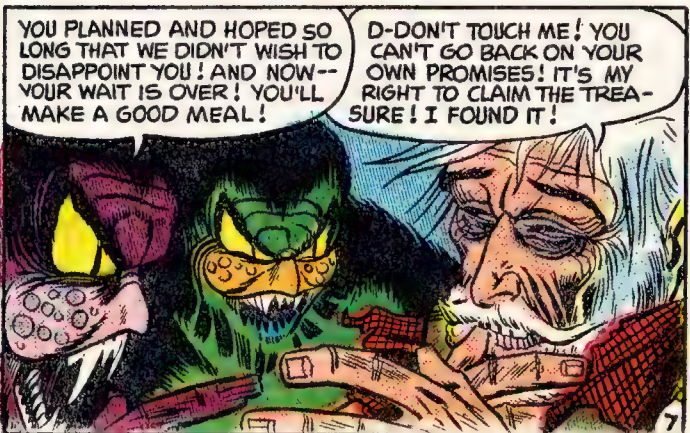
IT'S MINE NOW! NO ONE EVER MADE IT HERE BUT ME!
NO ONE! HA, HA...THE TREASURE'S MINE! I'M RICH!

THE JOKE MUST HAVE BEEN TOO MUCH FOR THE GOBLINS.
THEY DECIDED IT WAS TIME TO SURROUND AVERY.



WELCOME TO OUR HUMBLE ABODE,
AVERY! WE HAVE WAITED FOR YOU
A LONG TIME!

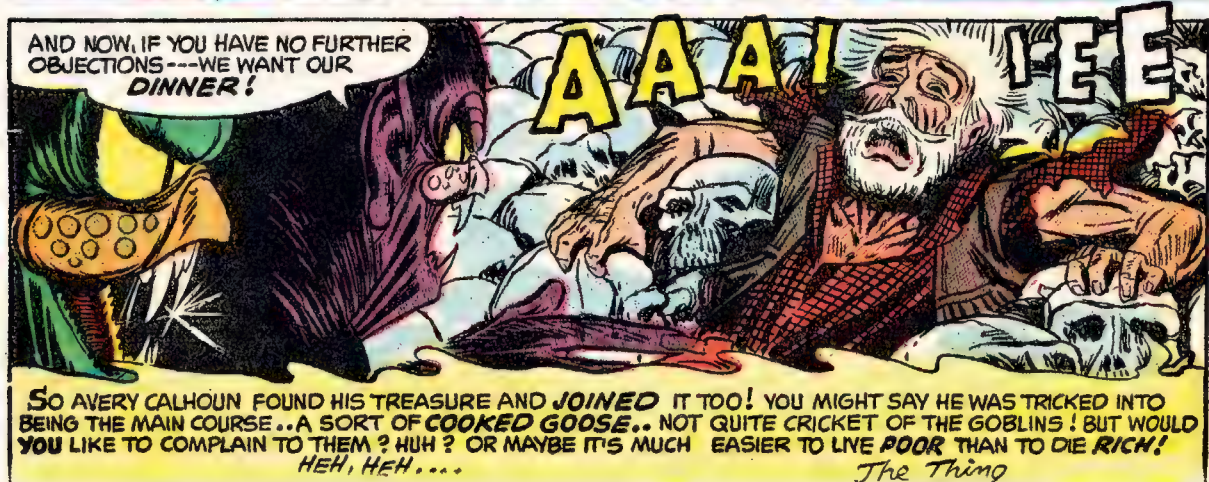
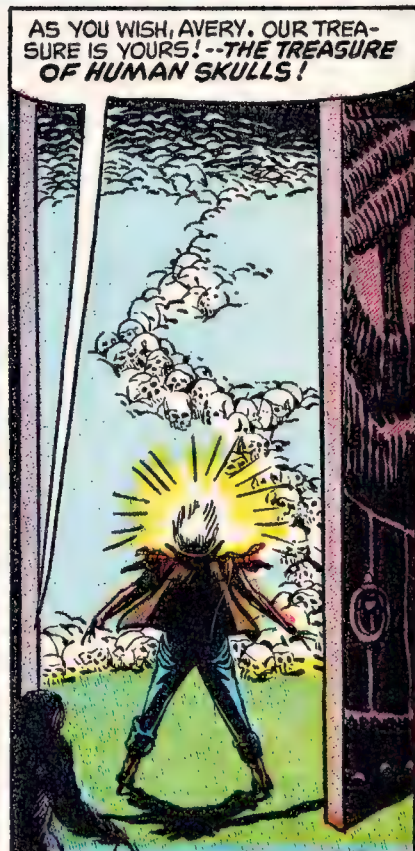
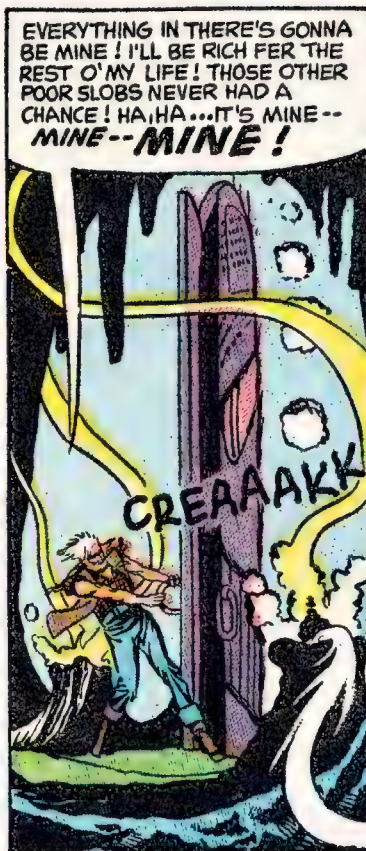
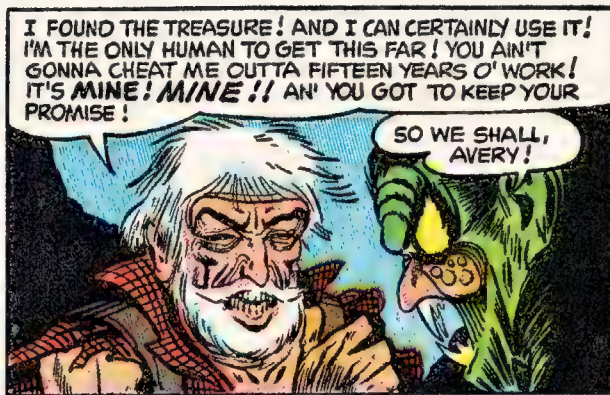
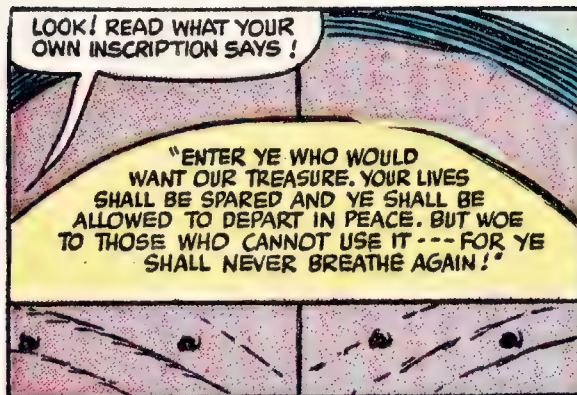
YOU!



YOU PLANNED AND HOPED SO
LONG THAT WE DIDN'T WISH TO
DISAPPOINT YOU! AND NOW--
YOUR WAIT IS OVER! YOU'LL
MAKE A GOOD MEAL!

D-DON'T TOUCH ME! YOU
CAN'T GO BACK ON YOUR
OWN PROMISES! IT'S MY
RIGHT TO CLAIM THE TREA-
SURE! I FOUND IT!

I--I DID IT!
IT'S IN
THERE! I'VE
FOUND THE
TREASURE!





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THEY WERE A BAND OF BRAVE PIONEERS GRIMLY RISKING THEIR LIVES SO THAT MILLIONS COULD LIVE. THEY HAD A DREAM TO CONQUER.. A DREAM THAT COULD BRING PEACE TO THE WORLD AND PROSPERITY TO MANKIND.. ONLY THEY HAD TO GAMBLE ON CHANCE. BUT LITTLE DID THEY KNOW THAT WHAT WAITED FOR THEM ON ALPHA CENTURAI WAS A VERY DIFFERENT...

HOMECOMING..



OUT THERE, JON.. IS THE ANSWER TO OUR CRUSHING PROBLEMS! THIS IS WHERE OUR DESTINATION IS! IT'S A DANGEROUS ONE!

IF ONLY WE COULD BE SURE, HAL! IF ONLY THERE WAS SOME WAY TO CHECK AND DOUBLE-CHECK OUR FINDINGS! MAYBE THEN IT WOULDN'T SEEM SO HAZARDOUS!

CHIEF SCIENTIST HAL NORREL TURNED WEARILY AWAY FROM HIS TELESCOPE-VIEWER. WHAT ANSWER COULD HE GIVE HIS CLOSE FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE JON TRENLON? WHAT ANSWER WAS FINAL?

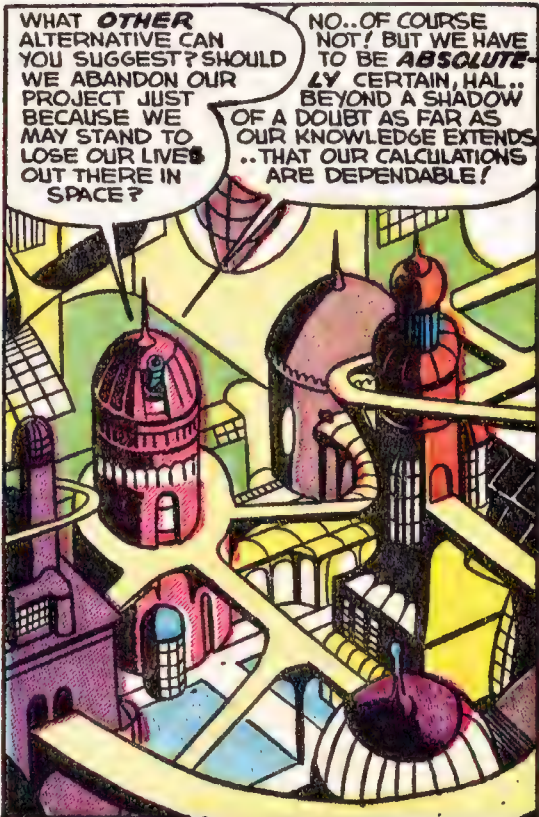
THERE IS NO DEFINITE WAY IN ANY PHASE OF OUR PROPOSED VENTURE! WE HAVE TO RISK OUR HUNCHES ON PURE CHANCE! ALPHA CENTURAI IS THE ONLY POSSIBLE STAR-SYSTEM CAPABLE OF SUSTAINING LIFE!

I DON'T KNOW... IT SEEMS SO UNSURE!



WHAT OTHER ALTERNATIVE CAN YOU SUGGEST? SHOULD WE ABANDON OUR PROJECT JUST BECAUSE WE MAY STAND TO LOSE OUR LIVES OUT THERE IN SPACE?

NO.. OF COURSE NOT! BUT WE HAVE TO BE **ABSOLUTELY** CERTAIN, HAL.. BEYOND A SHADOW OF A DOUBT AS FAR AS OUR KNOWLEDGE EXTENDS.. THAT OUR CALCULATIONS ARE DEPENDABLE!



LISTEN TO ME JON... OUT THERE ARE OVER FIVE BILLION PEOPLE STRUGGLING TO LIVE! EARTH TEEMS WITH PEOPLE OVER-CROWDED AREAS, SLUMS... AND NEW SLUMS ARE GROWING EVERY DAY! WE **MUST** FIND A PLANET CAPABLE OF LIFE!

I STILL FEEL MARS... OR POSSIBLY VENUS MAY TAKE UP THE LOAD!

MARS IS TOO ARRID... AND IN A FEW MILLION YEARS IT WILL LOSE ITS ATMOSPHERE. VENUS IS STILL A CHANGING WORLD. A GLOBAL EARTHQUAKE CAN DESTROY ANY COLONY WE SET UP THERE! NO... WE HAVE TO FIND A SUITABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOSPITALS AND CRIME CLINICS!

AND AS THEY TALKED, THEY CAME TO THE GIANT SPACESHIP THAT WAS BEING CONSTRUCTED UNDER THEIR VERY EYES...

WE HAVE TO FIND A VIRGIN STAR-SYSTEM WHERE AN ENTIRE PLANETARY SURFACE WILL SHELTER AND AID MANKIND'S POPULATION EXPANSION! AND HERE IS OUR ANSWER.. A SPACESHIP THAT WILL TAKE US TO ALPHA CENTAURI!

BUT NOW? THE TRIP ALONE IS OVER TWO HUNDRED YEARS!

BIO-RESEARCH SET UP A SUSPENDED ANIMATION STATIS FIELD THAT WILL PLACE US IN RETARDED METABOLISM FOR THE DURATION OF THE TRIP!

AND OUR LIVING QUARTERS?

EVERYTHING IS IN ORDER! WE HAVE OUR OWN HYDROPONICS* A LIBRARY, A MUSIC COLLECTION, ALL THE NECESSARY INSTRUMENTS AND TOOLS REQUIRED FOR A LONG VOYAGE. WE'LL BE QUITE COMFORTABLE IN THIS CABIN!

I'VE SEEN ENOUGH, HAL. NOW I'M **DETERMINED** TO COME ALONG. I COULDN'T EVER LIVE OUT MY LIFE WITHOUT TRYING TO CONQUER THIS GREATEST OF ALL PIONEERING VENTURES!

*HYDROPONICS: PLANTS, GREENERIES GROWN IN WATER FOR OUR OWN FOOD SUPPLY AND OXYGEN.

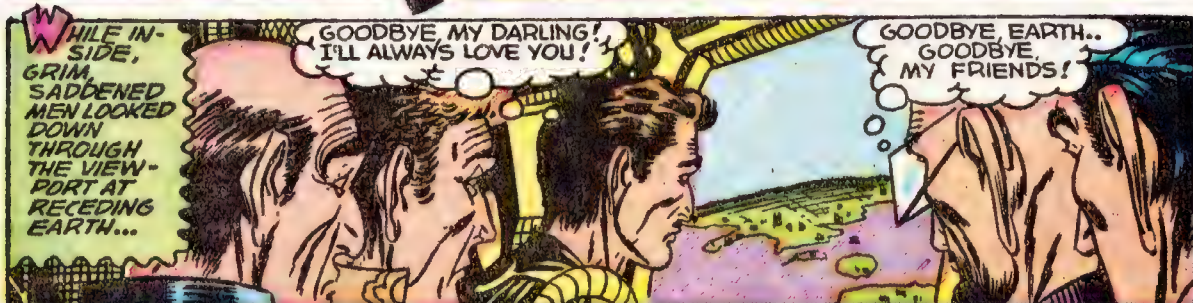
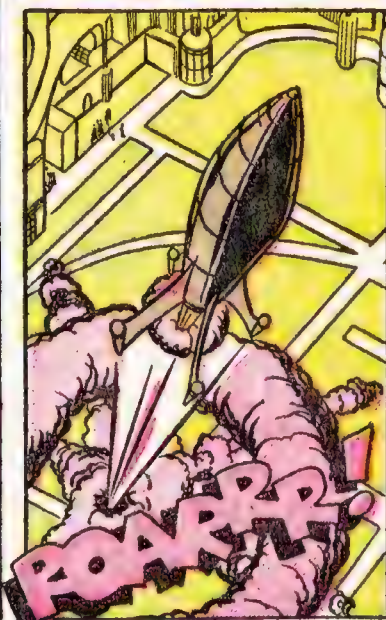
FIVE MEN... THE GREATEST SPECIALISTS IN THE WORLD.. TOOK FINAL LEAVE OF THEIR WIVES, FAMILIES, AND FRIENDS WITH THE SAME STEEL-LIKE DETERMINATION... KNOWING THEY WOULD NEVER SEE THEM AGAIN...

I CAN'T.. QUITE BELIEVE YOU'RE GOING, DEAREST. WHAT CAN I SAY?

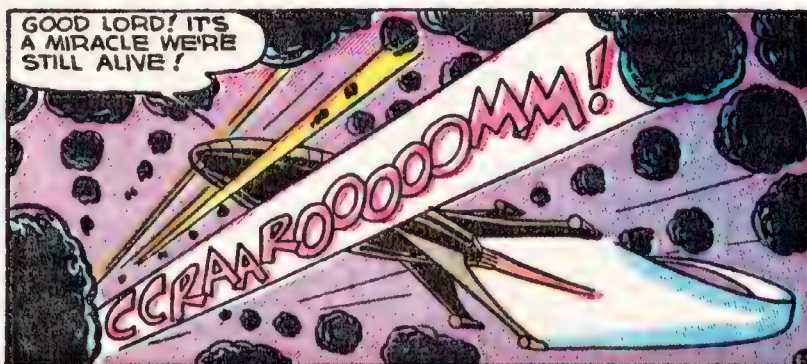
WE'VE BEEN HAPPY, DARLING. BUT NOW IT'S FOR **ALL** OF US THAT I GO! CAN YOU UNDERSTAND THAT WITHOUT BEING BITTER? OUR FUTURE IS OUT **THERE**.. AMONG THOSE STARS!



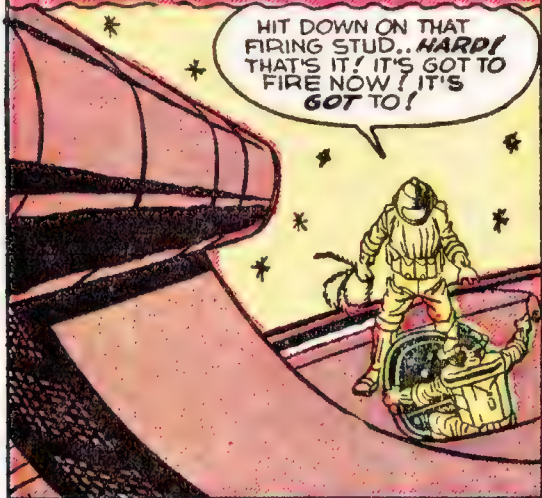
..IT SWAYED GRACEFULLY TWENTY FEET IN THE AIR.. A BIRD OF SPACE READY TO SWOOP UPWARDS WITHIN SECONDS!



NOW BEGAN A JOURNEY MARKED WITH PERILOUS ADVENTURES.. FIVE MEN WITH BUT A SINGLE THOUGHT. TO REACH ALPHA CENTURAI AND ESTABLISH A COLONY FOR FUTURE PIONEERS OF EARTH!



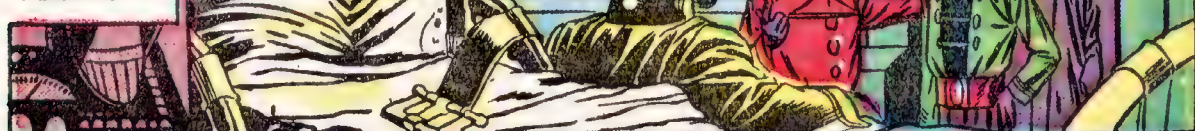
AND WHEN SUDDEN DEATH WAS CHEATED, THERE WERE OTHER LINGERING DEATHS... LIKE JAMMED ROCKET-TUBES THAT CRIPPLED THE SHIP...



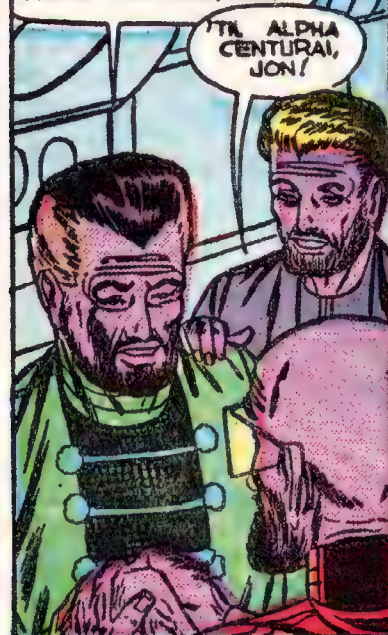
...OR SUBTLE, CUNNING DEATHS THAT BROUGHT ANNOYANCE, BOREDOM, RESENTMENT TO OTHER WISE SERIOUS MEN...



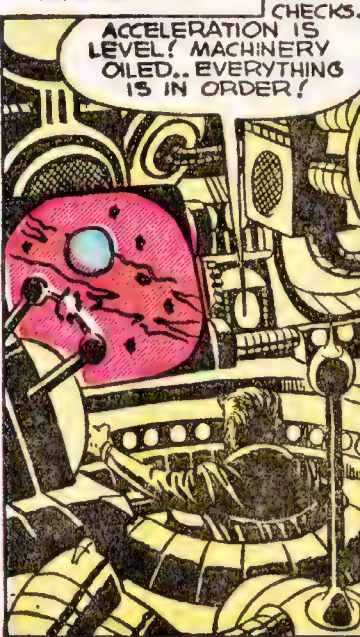
AND FINALLY... DEEP OUT IN SPACE... BLISSFUL... FORGETFULNESS WAS THE ONLY WEAPON TO COMBAT TENSION, AGE, AND FEAR...



I'LL RELEASE THE EMERGENCY CONTROLS SHOULD THERE BE ANY UNFORESEEN DANGER THREATENING US 'TIL ALPHA CENTAURI, HAL!



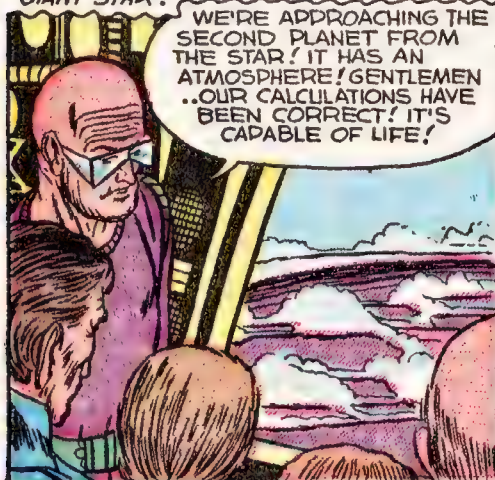
SO WHILE FOUR SLEPT, ONE MAN KEPT WATCH... EACH IN SUCCESSION... AS THE SHIP SPED TOWARDS ITS DESTINATION... ORBIT CHECKS.



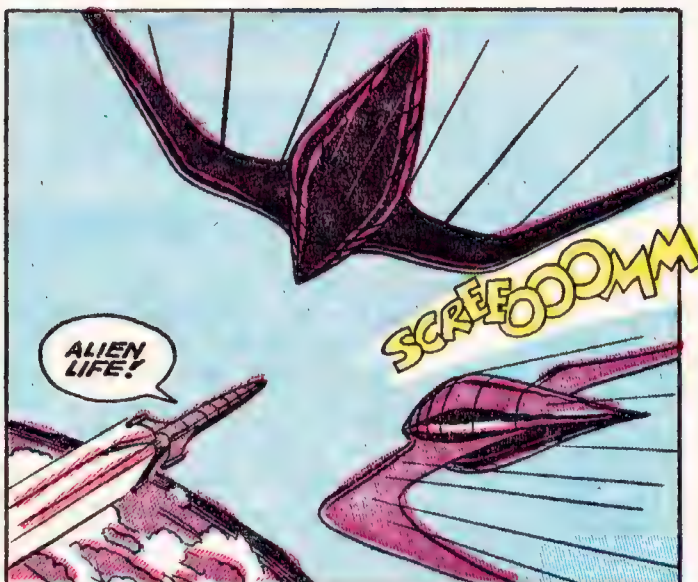
A RAPID PROGRESSION OF DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS... ONWARD EVER ONWARD, A DREAM TO COME TRUE!



THEN... THE OUTER ORBIT. THE INNER ORBIT... THE SYSTEM OF ALPHA CENTURAI! THE MEN NOW COMPLETELY AWAKE... AND EAGERLY WATCHING THE GIANT STAR!



WE'RE APPROACHING THE SECOND PLANET FROM THE STAR! IT HAS AN ATMOSPHERE! GENTLEMEN... OUR CALCULATIONS HAVE BEEN CORRECT! IT'S CAPABLE OF LIFE!

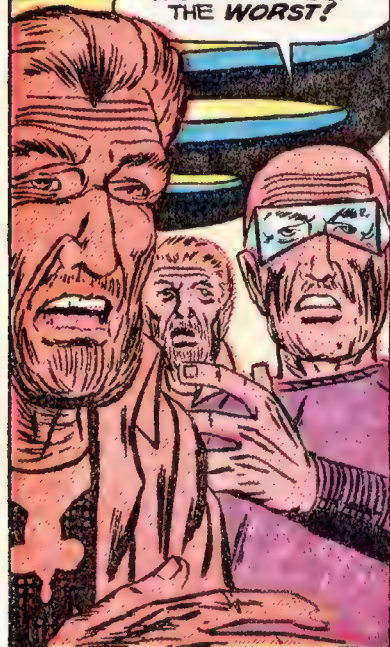


LIKE A STRICKEN BIRD, THE SPACESHIP SANK SLOWLY TOWARDS THE GROUND... ESCORTED BY THE SLIM, DEADLY CRAFTS THAT HOVERED ABOUT, POISED FOR INSTANT ACTION!



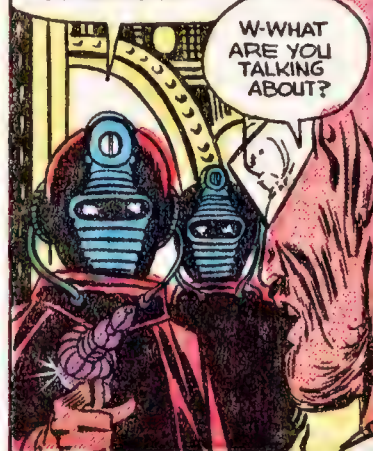
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO? SUPPOSE THEY'RE HOSTILE TO US?

I... I DON'T KNOW! OUR MISSION IS A FAILURE THEN! MANKIND WILL NEVER SETTLE DOWN PEACEFULLY WITH ANOTHER LIFE-FORM! WE CAN EXPECT THE **WORST!**



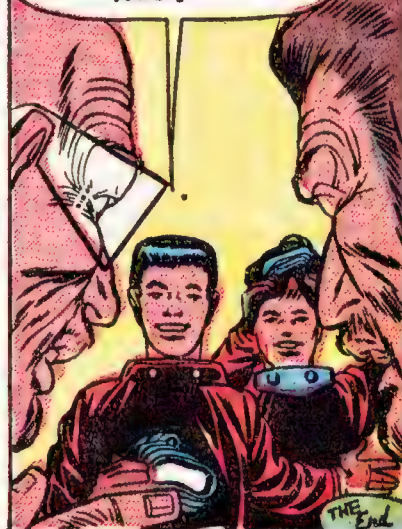
A WHIRR OF HIDDEN MACHINERY... A CLANK OF HEAVY LEAD BOOTS... AND OMINOUS SPACESUITED FIGURES APPROACHED... WEAPONS IN HAND... GREETING THE EARTH-MEN WHO FACED THEM...

WE HAVE FOLLOWED YOUR TRIP WITH INTEREST! IN FACT... WE HAVE EXPECTED YOU FOR YEARS! OUR PEOPLE WAIT OUTSIDE TO SEE YOU. THESE WEAPONS WERE ONLY A PRECAUTION... FORGIVE US!



W-WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

WELCOME TO **NEW EARTH**, HAL NORREL! YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES ARE GREAT HEROES! YOU SEE... ONE HUNDRED YEARS AFTER YOU LEFT, MAXIM ARMEN INVENTED THE SPACE DRIVE! WHAT TOOK YOU TWO HUNDRED YEARS, TOOK US **FIVE DAYS!** OUR COLONY IS THRIVING SUCCESSFULLY... WE ARRIVED **NINETY YEARS AGO!**





science fiction
SPACE ADVENTURES

No 11

SCIENCE FICTION **SPACE**

ADVENTURES ©

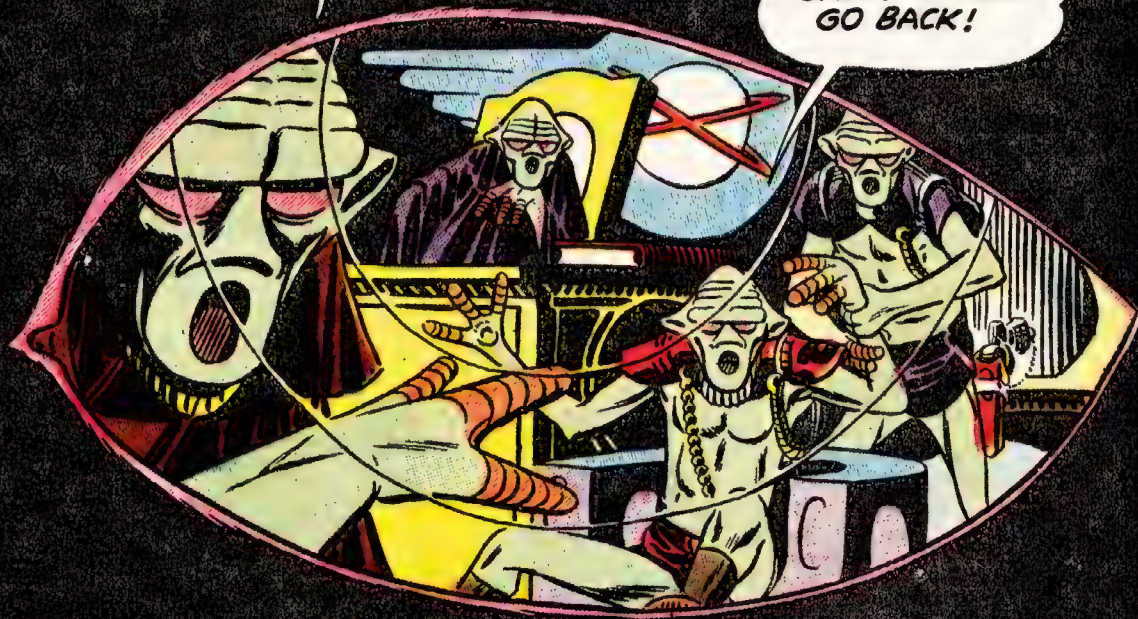
A CHARLTON PUBLICATION



YOU *are the* JURY

OBSERVE, JURYMEN, HOW THE DEFENDANT STRUGGLES! HE KNOWS HE IS GUILTY! ALL THROUGH THE TRIAL, HE HAS TRIED TO CONFUSE YOU WITH IRRELEVANCIES! HE HAS TRIED TO THROW UP A SMOKESCREEN TO OBSCURE THE **SERIOUSNESS** OF HIS CRIME...

LET ME GO
BACK! I MUST
GO BACK!

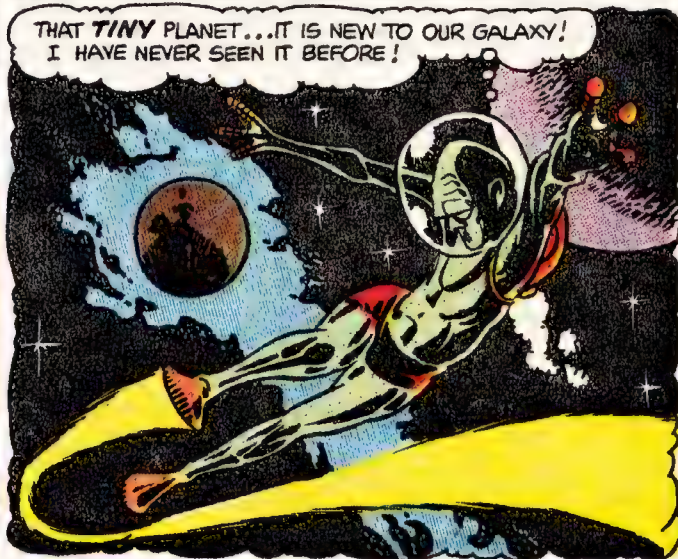
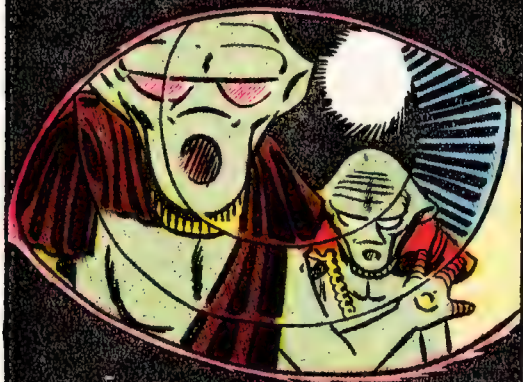


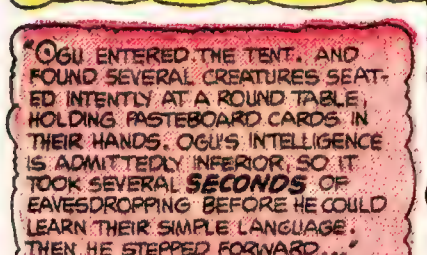
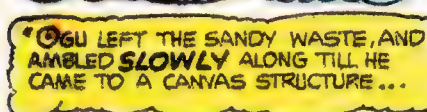
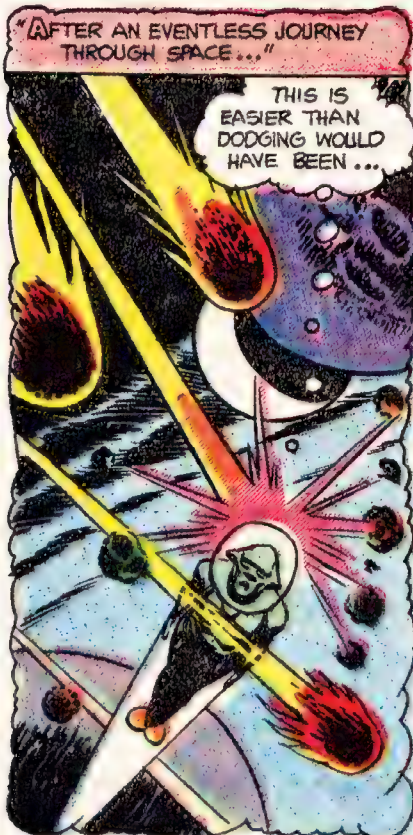
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FOR THE SAKE OF THE TRIAL RECORD, LET ME RE-TELL **HIS STORY** MINUS HIS WHINING AND INCOHERENCIES! ON THE FOURTH DAY OF THE MONTH OF FELBAR...

"...THE DEFENDANT, THIS DESPICABLE **OGU**, A COMMON SOLDIER IN OUR GLORIOUS ARMY, LEFT HIS SENTRY POST WITHOUT LEAVE ON A FLIGHT OF IDLE EXPLORATION!"

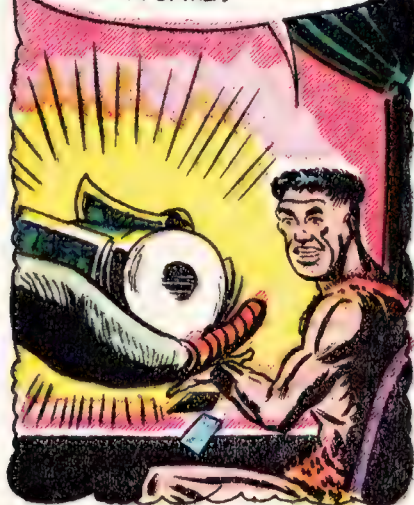
THAT **TINY** PLANET...IT IS NEW TO OUR GALAXY! I HAVE NEVER SEEN IT BEFORE!





"OGU'S MENTAL-SCANNER TOLD HIM THE CREATURES WERE HOPING HE WAS IN POSSESSION OF A GREAT QUANTITY OF THEIR PLANET'S CURRENCY. AS A GESTURE OF FRIENDLINESS, USING HIS **AUTO-MATERIALIZER**, HE CAUSED A GREAT WAD OF CRINKLY GREEN PAPER TO APPEAR IN HIS HAND..."

WOWIE! GRAB YOURSELF A SEAT, BUB--YOU GOT YOURSELF A GAME!



"IT WAS A SIMPLE GAME TO LEARN, AND OGU APPRECIATED THE CREATURE'S HOSPITALITY. FOR HE WAS AWARE THEY WERE PERMITTING HIM TO WIN..."

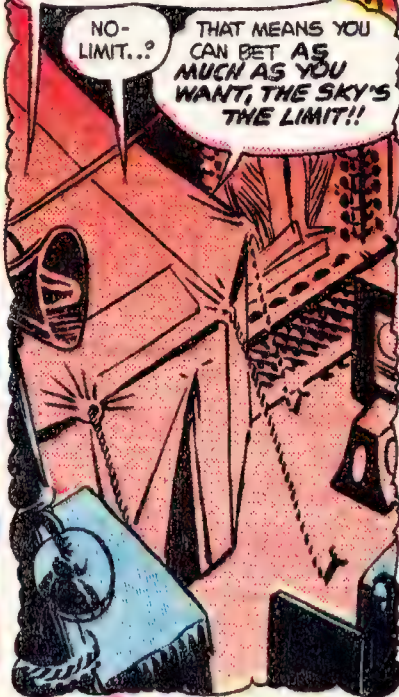
KEEP SUCKING HIM IN TILL HE'S HOOKED! THEN WE'LL SWITCH TO NO-LIMIT AND TAKE HIM FOR EVERYTHING HE HAS!



"SUDDENLY..." ENOUGH OF THIS KID-STUFF! LET'S BEGIN A **HE-MAN** GAME NOW--- **NO-LIMIT POKER!**

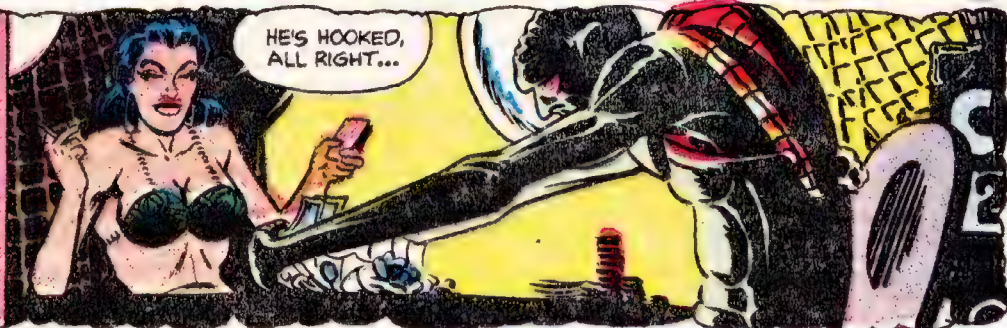
NO-LIMIT...

THAT MEANS YOU CAN BET AS MUCH AS YOU WANT, THE SKY'S THE LIMIT!!



"SO THEY BEGAN PLAYING FOR HIGH STAKES. AND A STRANGE FEELING SWEEPED OVER OGU. HE HAD CAUGHT FROM THE CREATURES THE INFANTILE DESIRE TO WIN AT THIS FOOLISH GAME!"

HE'S HOOKED, ALL RIGHT...



"AND WITH THE AID OF HIS **AUTO-MATERIALIZER**, HE CAUSED WINNING PASTE-BOARDS TO KEEP APPEARING IN HIS HAND!"

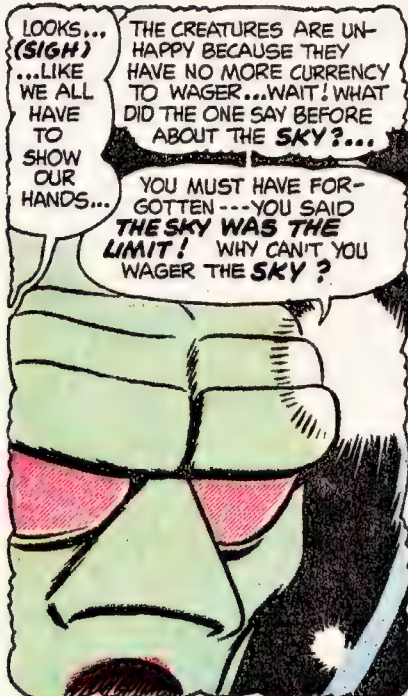
WHAT'S WRONG? THAT'S THE SIXTH BIG POT IN A ROW THE FREAK'S TAKEN. IF THIS KEEPS UP, WE'LL GET CLEANED OUT!

KEEP YOUR SHIRT ON! I DEAL NEXT! I'LL MAKE SURE ONE OF US GETS THE WINNING HAND! I'LL GIVE HIM A GOOD HAND TOO, SO HE'LL KEEP RAISING! THIS IS GONNA BE THE POT TO END ALL POTS!

"SO THE PASTEBOARDS WERE DEALT FOR THIS POT TO END ALL POTS! EVERYBODY KEPT RAISING! AND SOON..."

NONE OF YOU HAS ANY MORE OF THE GREEN CRINKLY PAPERS. WHAT HAPPENS NOW?





LOOKS...
(SIGH)
...LIKE
WE ALL
HAVE TO
SHOW
OUR
HANDS...

THE CREATURES ARE UN-
HAPPY BECAUSE THEY
HAVE NO MORE CURRENCY
TO WAGER...WAIT! WHAT
DID THE ONE SAY BEFORE
ABOUT THE **SKY**?...

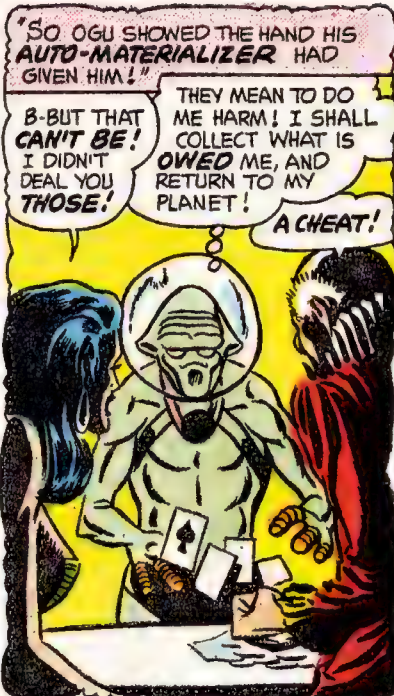
YOU MUST HAVE FOR-
GOTTEN ---YOU SAID
**THE SKY WAS THE
LIMIT!** WHY CAN'T YOU
WAGER THE **SKY**?



THIS
SUCKER'S
**REALLY
NUTS!**

I KNOW I GOT THE
WINNING HAND BE-
CAUSE I DEALT IT
TO MYSELF! **HMMM**
--IF HE HAS A SCREW
LOOSE, **WHY NOT** MAKE
BELIEVE WE'RE BETTING
THE **SKY**...?

OKAY, BUB, IT'S THE
SKY AGAINST ALL
THE REST OF YOUR
DOUGH! NOW LET'S
SEE YOUR HAND!



**"SO OGU SHOWED THE HAND HIS
AUTO-MATERIALIZER HAD
GIVEN HIM!"**

**B-BUT THAT
CAN'T BE!
I DIDN'T
DEAL YOU
THOSE!**

THEY MEAN TO DO
ME HARM! I SHALL
COLLECT WHAT IS
OWED ME, AND
RETURN TO MY
PLANET!

A CHEAT!

**"AND SO OGU SOARED UPWARD
THROUGH SPACE, DRAGGING
WITH HIM THE TINY
PLANET'S SKY AS WAS
HIS DUE!"**



RI-I-I-PP!

**"EVEN AS HE FLEW, HE COULD
HEAR THE GROANS AND GASPS
OF ALL THE CREATURES BELOW--
FOR WITHOUT THEIR SKY, THEY
LACKED **OXYGEN**, A VITAL
ELEMENT FOR THEIR SURVIVAL!"**



AAARGH!

**"BUT BEFORE HE COULD RETURN TO
REPLACE THE SKY, CLAIMS
OGU, HE WAS PICKED UP BY ONE
OF OUR PATROLS!"**



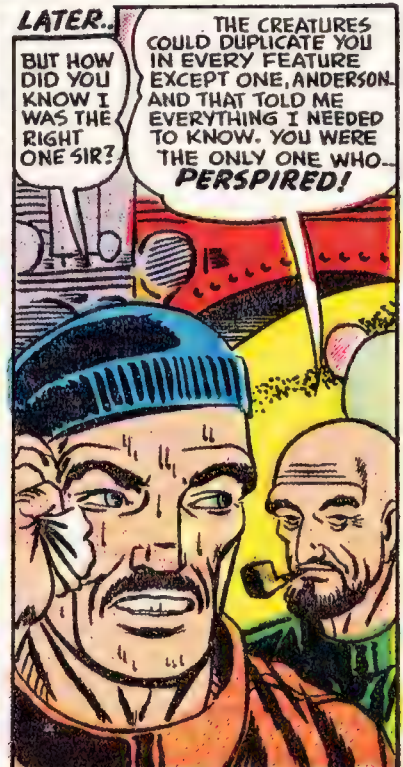
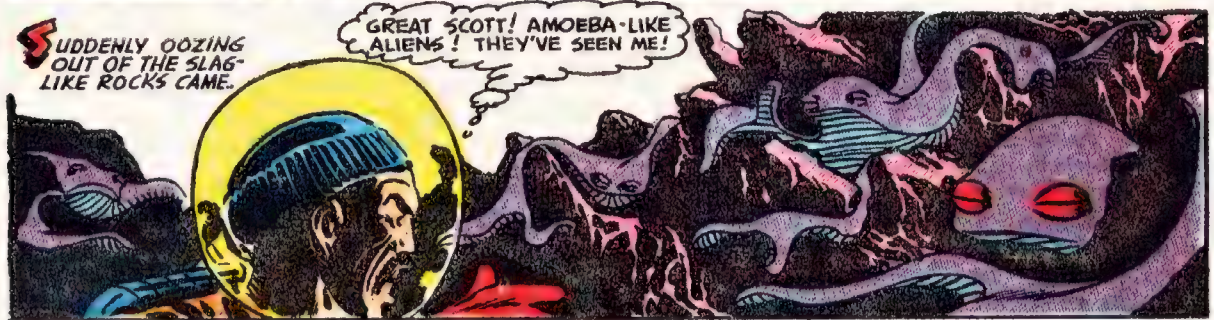
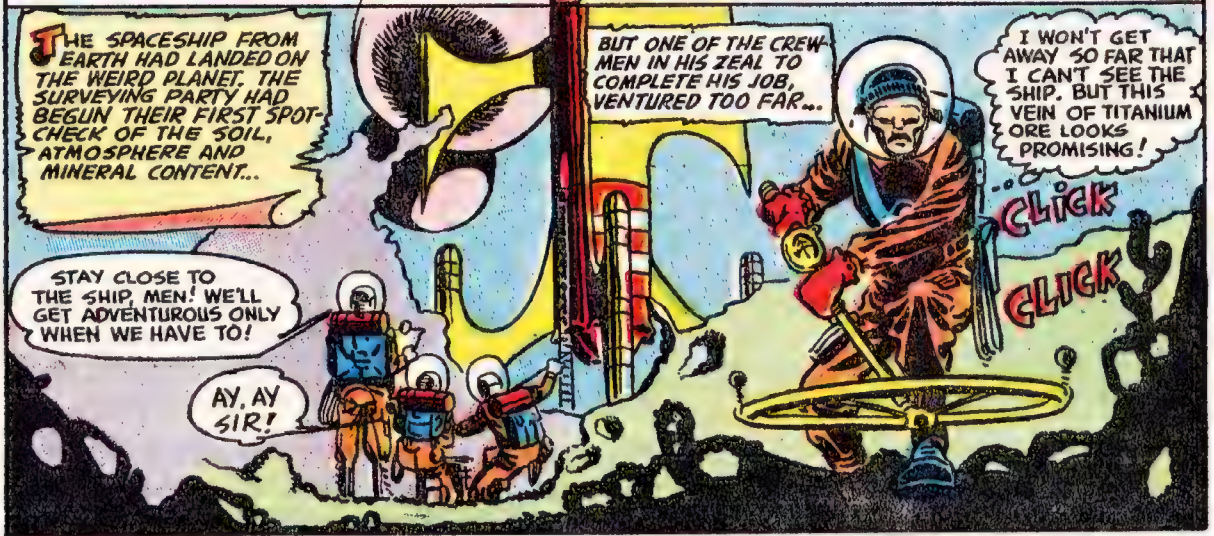
HOLD HIM!
HE'S A
DESERTER!

NO...PLEASE...
DON'T ARREST
ME NOW! THAT
PLANET DOWN
THERE! IF I DON'T GO
BACK, EVERYONE WILL
DIE! **I MUST GO
BACK!**

OGU STILL SCREAMS FOR PERMISSION
TO RETURN AND REPLACE THE PLANET'S
SKY... BUT **I** SAY IT IS JUST A **STALLING
TACTIC** TO DELAY HIS TRIAL! REMEM-
BER-- HE IS BEING TRIED FOR **BEING
ABSENT WITHOUT LEAVE FROM
HIS MILITARY POST**, AND FOR
NOTHING ELSE! SO TAKE YOUR TIME
AS YOU CAREFULLY DELIBERATE THE
SEVERITY OF HIS SENTENCE! NOTHING
MUST SIDE-TRACK YOU... **YOU ARE
THE JURY!!**



MOMENT of DECISION



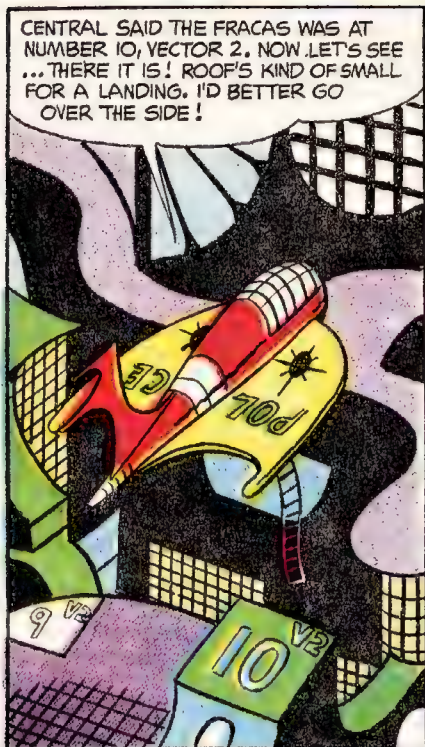
ANDOR WAS PROMISED INFINITE RICHES AND
UNDYING LOVE IF HE WOULD DELIVER HIS
PRECIOUS CARGO TO THE TINY ASTEROID
IN OUTER SPACE. AND SO HE FLEW
TOWARD FARAWAY KLAXON,
GUIDED BY...

DEAD RECKONING!





PROBABLY ANOTHER CAT CAUGHT IN A TREE! FOR 20 CENTILES I'D QUIT THIS LOUSY JOB AND...OH, WELL! UNTIL SOMETHING BETTER COMES ALONG I MIGHT AS WELL STAY WITH THE FORCE!



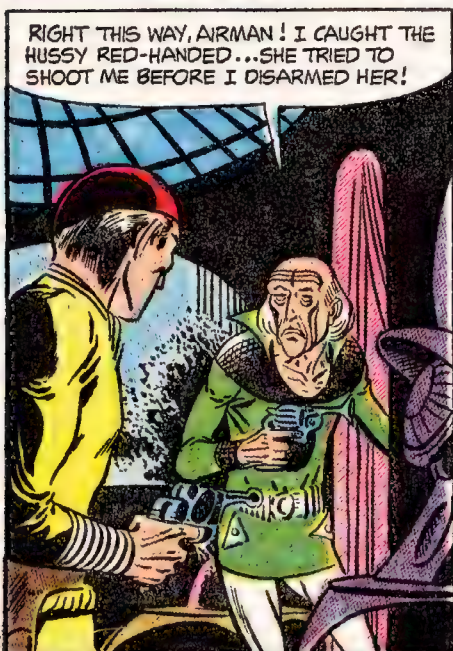
CENTRAL SAID THE FRACAS WAS AT NUMBER 10, VECTOR 2. NOW LET'S SEE...THERE IT IS! ROOF'S KIND OF SMALL FOR A LANDING. I'D BETTER GO OVER THE SIDE!



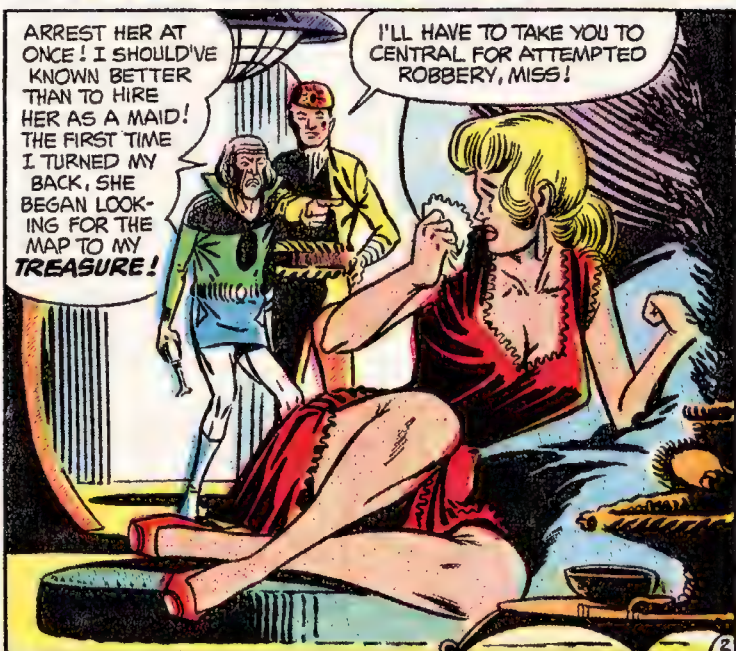
SHIP'S UNDER SELF-CONTROL... NOW TO SEE WHAT'S GOING ON! THINGS ON THIS BEAT ARE SO BORING I'D WELCOME A GOOD JUICY MURDER! BUT THAT'S TOO MUCH TO EXPECT!



I'D GIVE ANYTHING TO HAVE THIS LIKE THOSE OLDTIME DETECTIVE STORIES I ONCE READ AS A KID. I'M A PRIVATE-EYE IN SEARCH OF ADVENTURE, AND A LUSCIOUS DOLL OPENS THE DOOR FOR ME... BUT THAT KIND OF STUFF ENDED WITH THE TWENTIETH CENTURY!

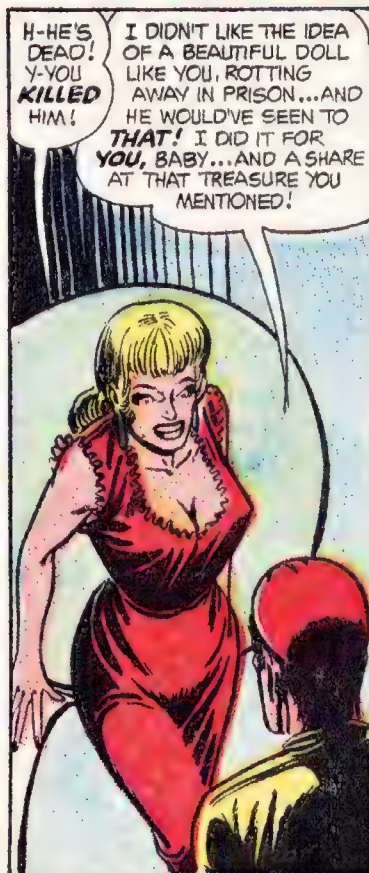
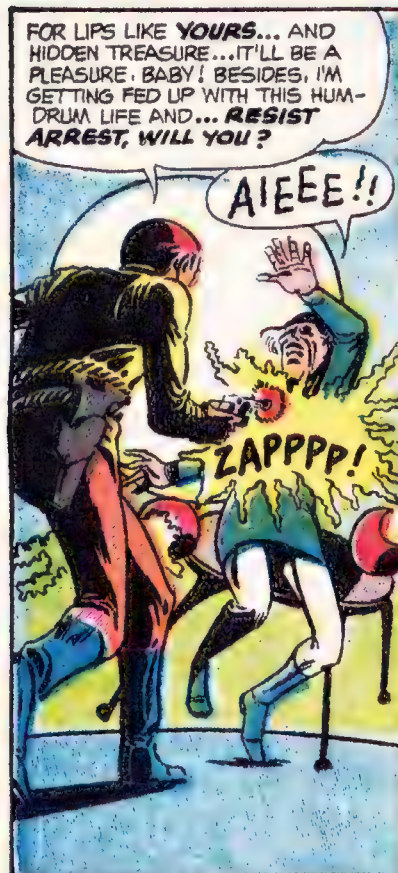
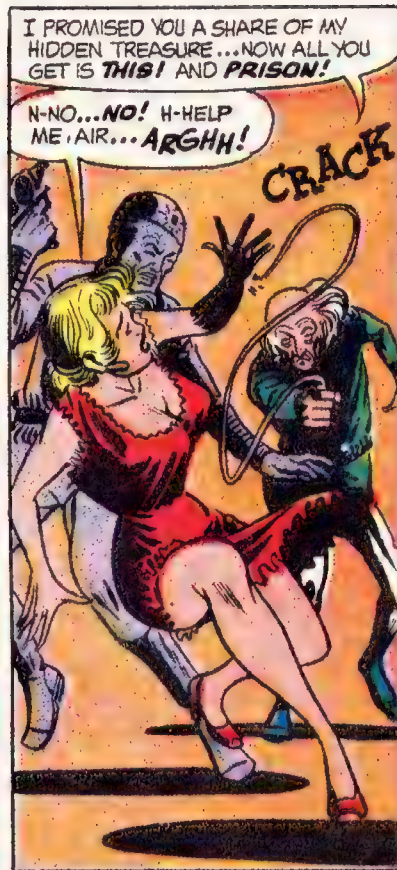
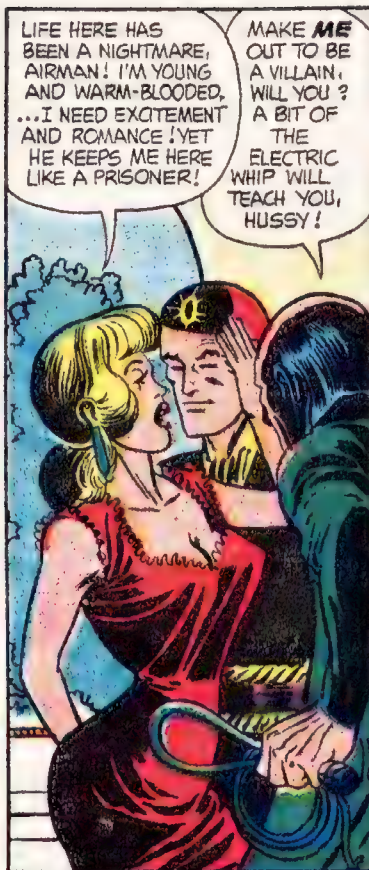


RIGHT THIS WAY, AIRMAN! I CAUGHT THE HUSSY RED-HANDED...SHE TRIED TO SHOOT ME BEFORE I DISARMED HER!

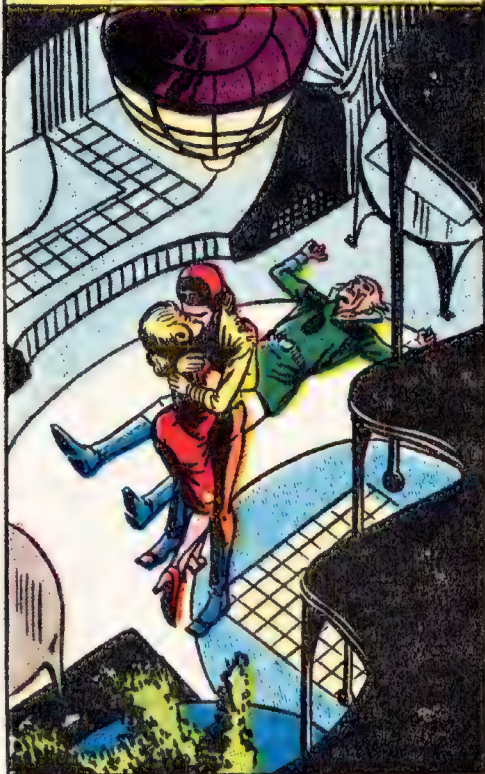


ARREST HER AT ONCE! I SHOULD'VE KNOWN BETTER THAN TO HIRE HER AS A MAID! THE FIRST TIME I TURNED MY BACK, SHE BEGAN LOOKING FOR THE MAP TO MY TREASURE!

I'LL HAVE TO TAKE YOU TO CENTRAL FOR ATTEMPTED ROBBERY, MISS!



IN THE SILENCE OF THE ROOM, IN WHICH DEATH CROUCHED, ANDOR'S LIPS PRESSED HOTLY AGAINST KYT'S, AND LOVE FUCKERED, THEN BURNED BRIGHTLY...

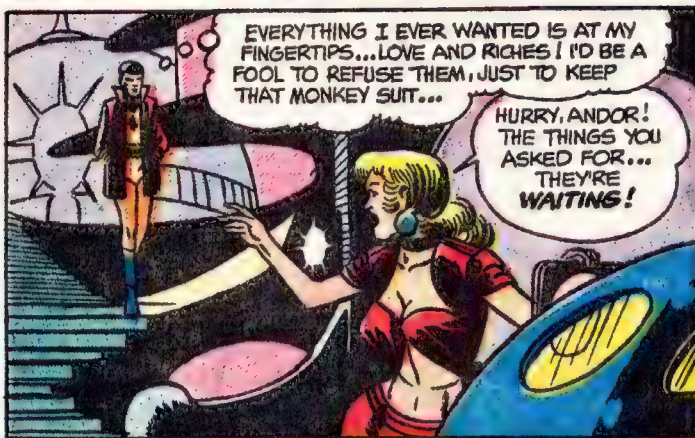


THE NEXT DAY, AT AIR PATROL CENTRAL...

...AND THIS UNFORTUNATE KILLING...EVEN THOUGH THE MAN WAS RESISTING ARREST, SIR...H-HAS KIND OF UNNERVED ME! THAT'S WHY I'M SUBMITTING MY PAPERS...



I UNDERSTAND, ANDOR. YOUR RESIGNATION IS ACCEPTED! AND GOOD LUCK!



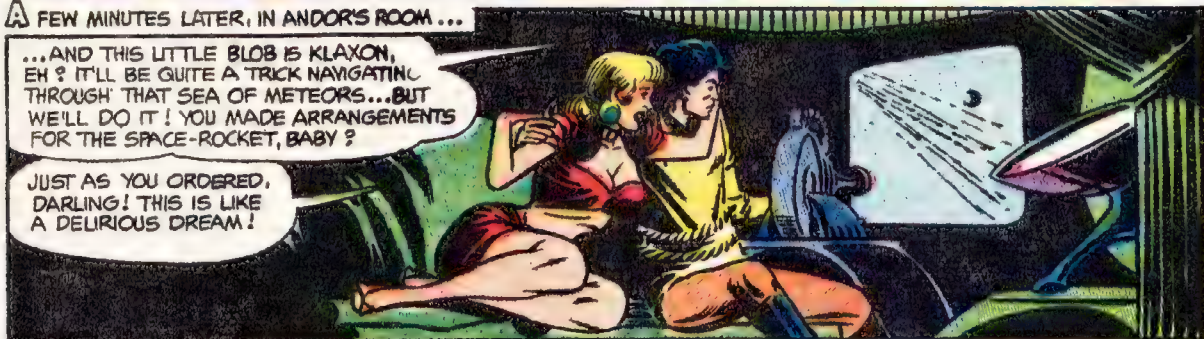
EVERYTHING I EVER WANTED IS AT MY FINGERTIPS...LOVE AND RICHES! I'D BE A FOOL TO REFUSE THEM, JUST TO KEEP THAT MONKEY SUIT...

HURRY, ANDOR! THE THINGS YOU ASKED FOR... THEY'RE WAITING!

A FEW MINUTES LATER, IN ANDOR'S ROOM...

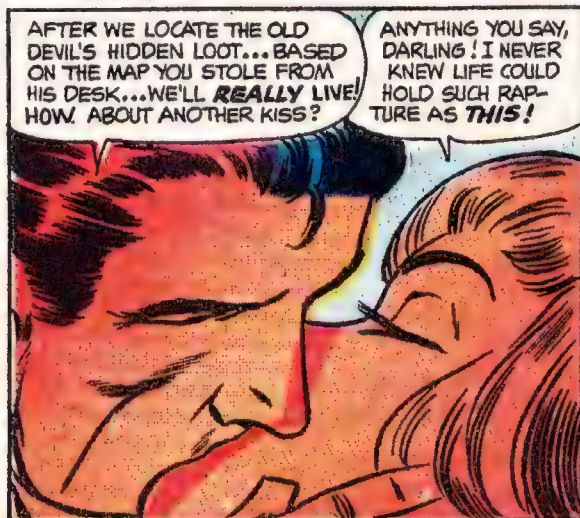
...AND THIS LITTLE BLOB IS KLAXON, EH? IT'LL BE QUITE A TRICK NAVIGATING THROUGH THAT SEA OF METEORS...BUT WE'LL DO IT! YOU MADE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SPACE-ROCKET, BABY?

JUST AS YOU ORDERED, DARLING! THIS IS LIKE A DELIRIOUS DREAM!



AFTER WE LOCATE THE OLD DEVIL'S HIDDEN LOOT...BASED ON THE MAP YOU STOLE FROM HIS DESK...WE'LL **REALLY** LIVE! HOW, ABOUT ANOTHER KISS?

ANYTHING YOU SAY, DARLING! I NEVER KNEW LIFE COULD HOLD SUCH RAPTURE AS **THIS!**



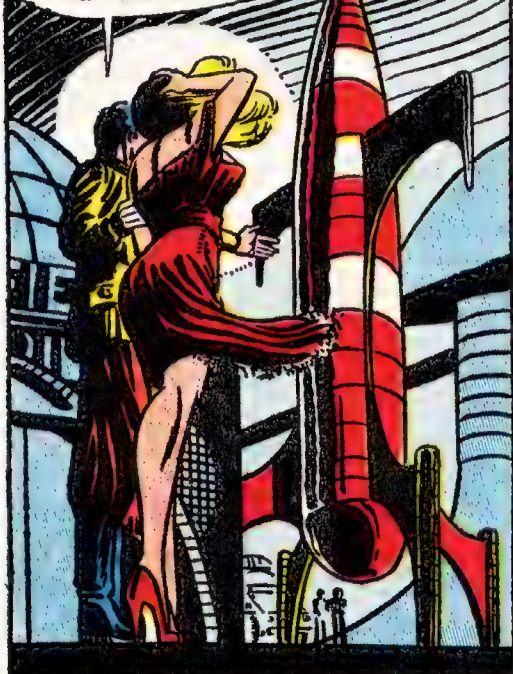
MMMM...THAT LIPSTICK OF YOURS MAKES MY HEAD SWIM, BABY. IMAGINE...MORE MONEY THAN I CAN COUNT...AND **YOU**, BESIDES! IT'LL BE PARADISE AND...YUMMM! THAT LIPSTICK'S SWEETER THAN NECTAR!

AND **YOU**, ANDOR, ARE THE ANSWER TO A MAIDEN'S PRAYER!



DAYS OF FRENZIED ACTIVITY WHIRLED BY FOR KYT AND ANDOR . THEN...

EVERY CENTILE WE'VE GOT IS TIED UP IN THAT SPACE-JALOPY, BABY! CROSS YOUR FINGERS...HERE WE GO!



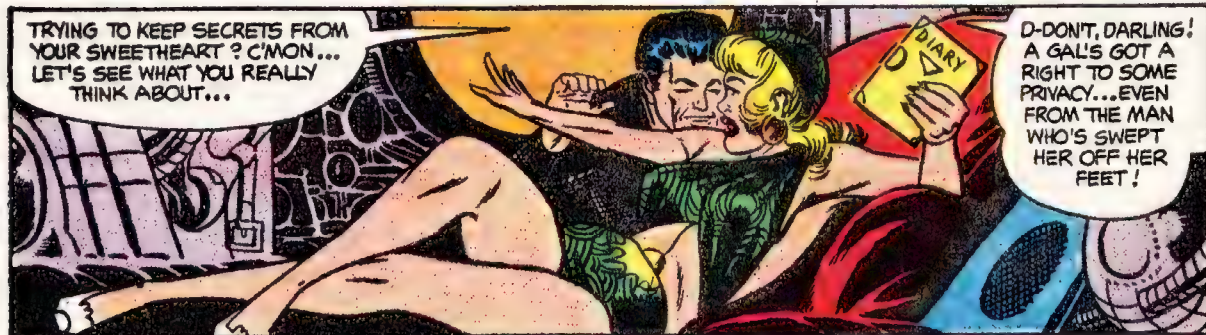
UP INTO DARK SPACE THE ROCKET SHIP HURTL'D, FOR TWO DAYS ANDOR AND KYT BLASTED ACROSS THE COSMOS..

LOOK, BABY! WE'RE SKIPPING RIGHT THROUGH THE SEA OF METEORS WITHOUT EVEN GETTING OUR HAIR MUSS'D! THIS IS THE GATEWAY TO KLAXON AND...HEY! WHAT'S THAT YOU BEEN SCRIBBLING ALL DAY?

JUST...JUST MY INNERMOST THOUGHTS, DARLING! A-ABOUT YOU!



TRYING TO KEEP SECRETS FROM YOUR SWEETHEART? C'MON... LET'S SEE WHAT YOU REALLY THINK ABOUT...



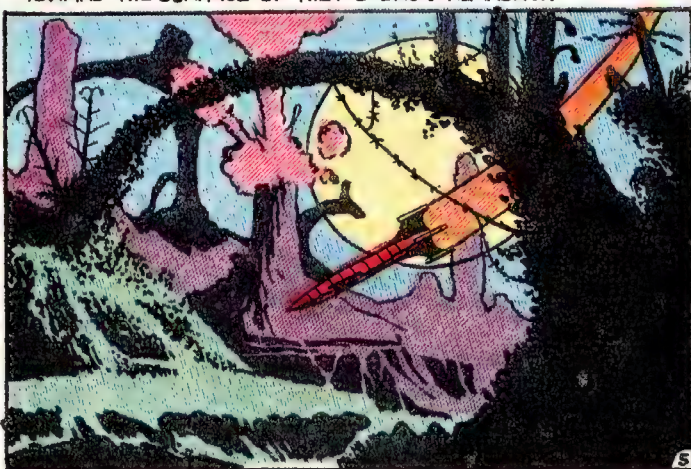
D-DON'T, DARLING! A GAL'S GOT A RIGHT TO SOME PRIVACY...EVEN FROM THE MAN WHO'S SWEPT HER OFF HER FEET!

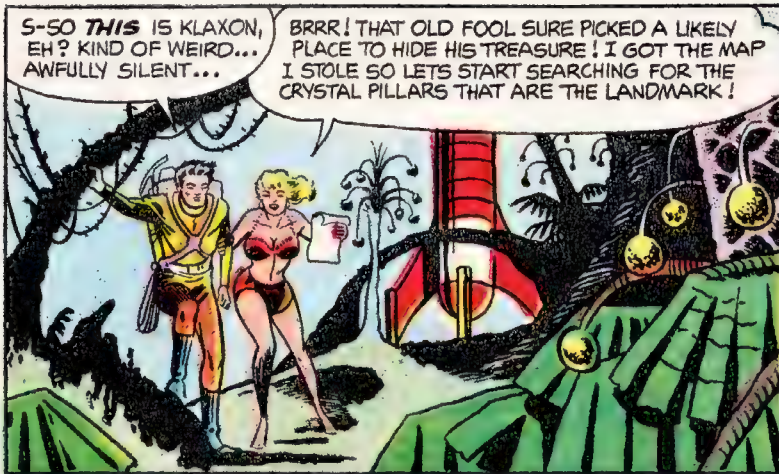
YOU'LL LEARN WHAT'S IN MY DIARY SOON ENOUGH, DARLING! AS SOON AS... WH-WHAT'S THAT?

THE...THE SHIP'S WOBBLING ALL OVER THE SKY! W-WE MUST BE ENTERING KLAXON'S GRAVITATIONAL FIELD! HOLD YOUR HAT... WE'RE GOING IN!



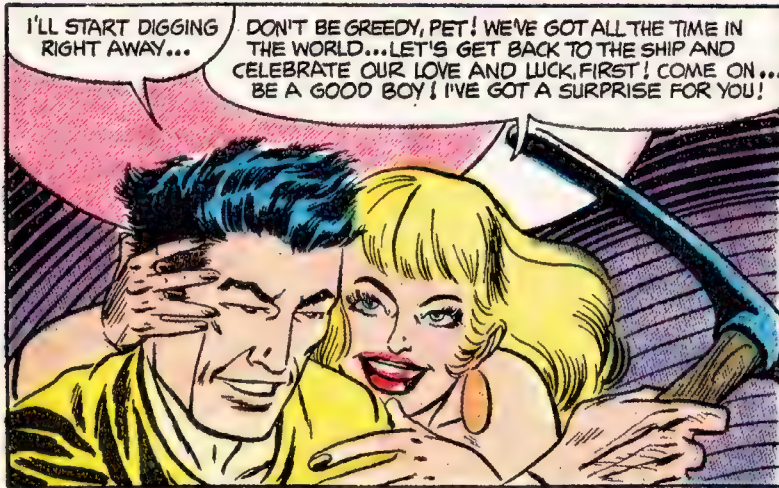
DOWN THROUGH THE SKY THE SPACE SHIP PLUMMETED, DOWN TOWARD THE SURFACE OF THE ASTEROID KLAXON...





S-SO **THIS** IS KLAXON, EH? KIND OF WEIRD... AWFULLY SILENT...

BRRR! THAT OLD FOOL SURE PICKED A LIKELY PLACE TO HIDE HIS TREASURE! I GOT THE MAP I STOLE SO LET'S START SEARCHING FOR THE CRYSTAL PILLARS THAT ARE THE LANDMARK!



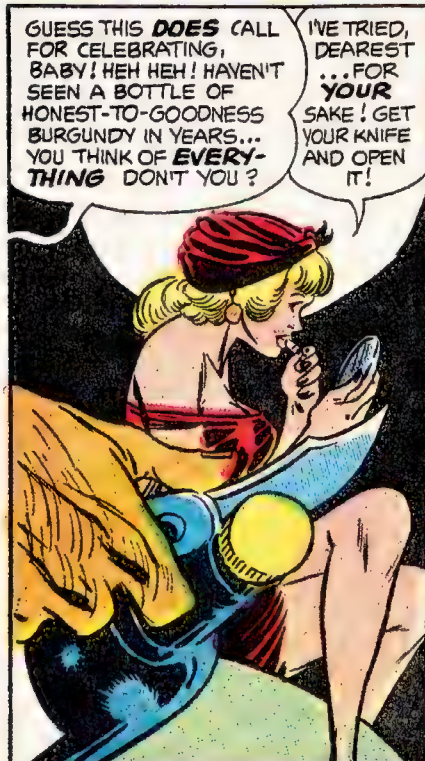
I'LL START DIGGING RIGHT AWAY...

DON'T BE GREEDY, PET! WE'VE GOT ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD...LET'S GET BACK TO THE SHIP AND CELEBRATE OUR LOVE AND LUCK, FIRST! COME ON... BE A GOOD BOY! I'VE GOT A SURPRISE FOR YOU!



L-LOOK BABY! THE CRYSTAL PILLARS... OUR FUTURE'S MADE!

WE FOUND IT, DARLING! ALL THAT WEALTH... OURS! YOURS AND MINE!



GUESS THIS **DOES** CALL FOR CELEBRATING, BABY! HEH HEH! HAVEN'T SEEN A BOTTLE OF HONEST-TO-GOODNESS BURGUNDY IN YEARS... YOU THINK OF **EVERYTHING** DON'T YOU?

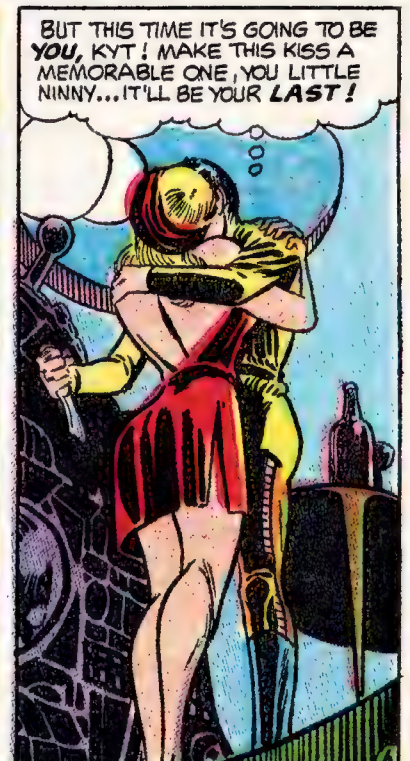
I'VE TRIED, DEAREST...FOR **YOUR** SAKE! GET YOUR KNIFE AND OPEN IT!



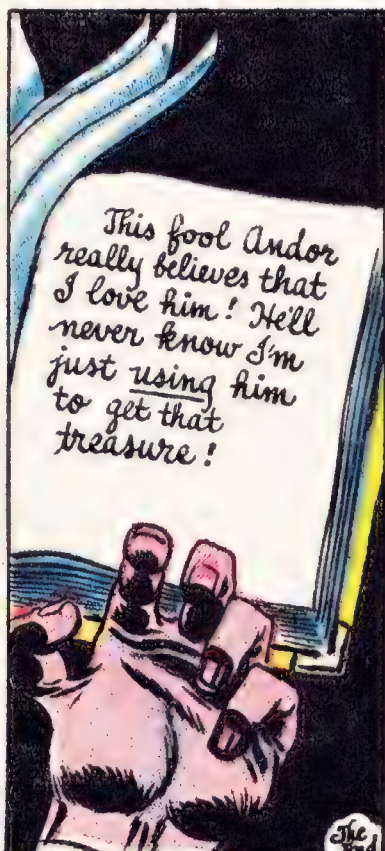
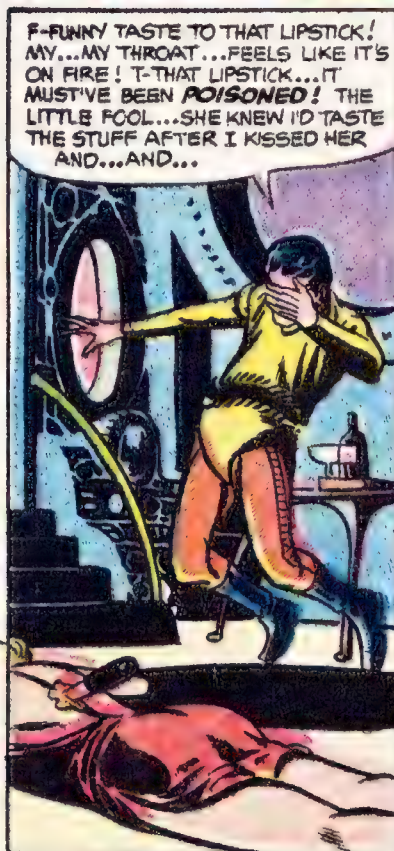
THE JUBILANT PAIR DRANK GREEDILY OF THE WINE. THEIR HEADS SPINNING WITH TRIUMPH, THEY CLUNG TOGETHER IN A PASSIONATE EMBRACE...

PRESS YOUR LIPS AGAINST MINE, DARLING! TELL ME ONCE AGAIN HOW MUCH YOU LOVE ME!

I'VE KILLED FOR YOU, BABY...AND I'D DO IT AGAIN!



BUT THIS TIME IT'S GOING TO BE **YOU**, KYT! MAKE THIS KISS A MEMORABLE ONE, YOU LITTLE NINNY...IT'LL BE YOUR **LAST**!





THIS MAGAZINE IS
HAUNTED

THIS MAGAZINE IS

HAUNTED

10¢

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TOO
FRIGHTENED TO SCREAM... TOO
TERROR-STRICKEN TO MOVE?
THIS IS THE SENSATION THAT
AWAITS YOU BEHIND THIS COVER!

DR. DEATH



THIS MAGAZINE IS HAUNTED

The following outstanding magazines are easily identified on their covers by the words A CHARLTON PUBLICATION

ATOMIC MOUSE ★ COWBOY WESTERN HEROES ★ CRIME AND JUSTICE ★ FUNNY ANIMAL ★
EHI dig this crazy comic ★ HAUNTED ★ HOT RODS AND RACING CARS ★ ZOO FUNNIES ★
LASH LARUE WESTERN ★ ROCKY LANE WESTERN ★ THE THING ★ SIX-GUN HEROES ★
ROMANTIC STORY ★ SCIENCES-FICTION SPACE ADVENTURES ★ STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES ★
SWEETHEARTS ★ TEX RITTER WESTERN ★ TRUE LIFE SECRETS ★ TV TEENS ★

ON THE BRUTAL GLARE OF THE STARK KLEIG LIGHTS, BRUNO THOR PLAYED HIS HEART OUT IN THE GREATEST ROLE OF HIS CAREER. FOR, TO THE SINISTER MAN-OF-A THOUSAND-GRIEUSOME-FACES, THE GHASTLY STORY WAS SOMETHING SPECIAL...A MACABRE ADVENTURE IN...

3-D

DISASTER DOOM DEATH!

K-KEEP AWAY FROM ME! THIS... THIS ISN'T IN THE SCRIPT!

Dicho

Y-YOU CAN'T GO IN THERE, MR. THOR! THERE'S A CONFERENCE GOING ON...

GET OUTA MY WAY, SISTER! NO ONE KEEPS BRUNO THOR FROM SPEAKING HIS PIECE TO THOSE WILY LITTLE CRUMBS IN THERE!

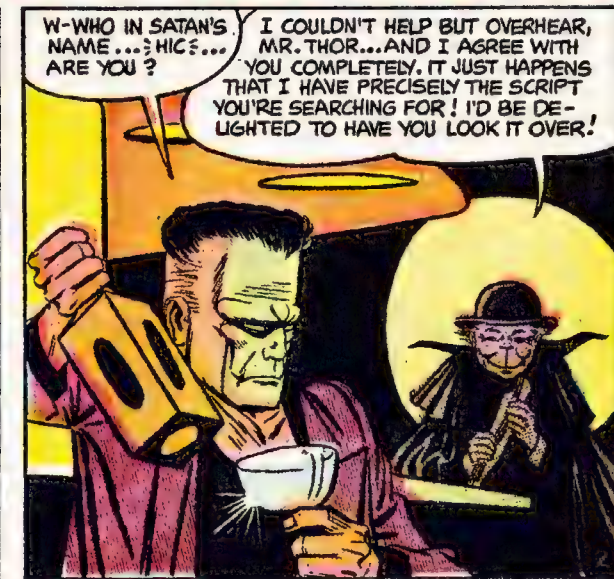
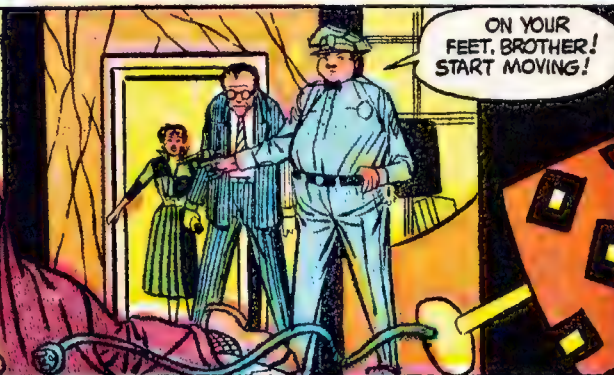
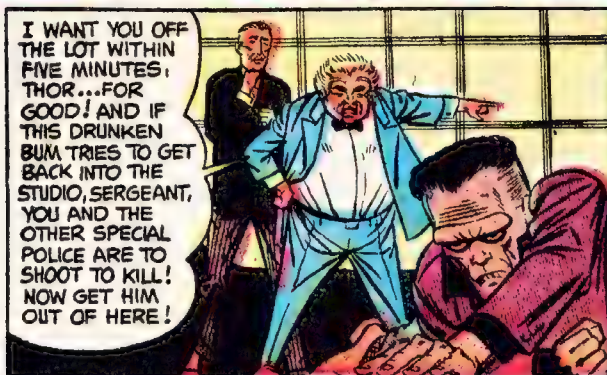
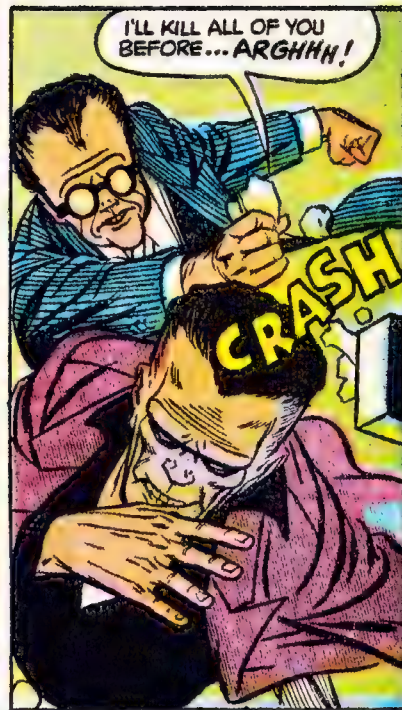
SIMON JUST STUDIO PERSIVO

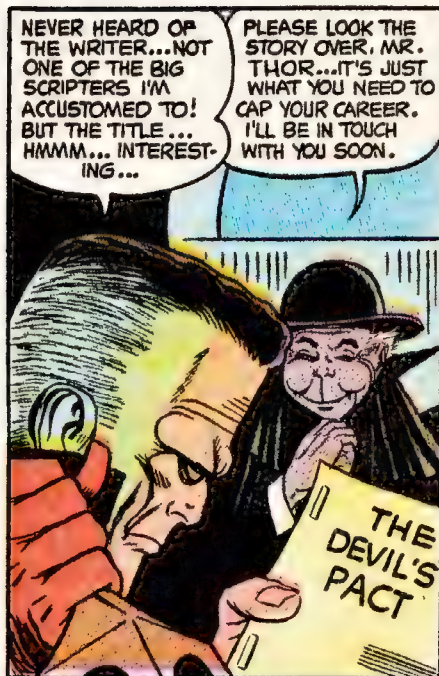
ALICE, WHO..

TRY TO SHOVE ME AROUND LIKE A LOUSY EXTRA, EH? I HELPED PUT THIS FLEA-BAG STUDIO ON THE MAP...AND I'M NOT GONNA SIT AROUND CALMLY AND LET YOU TWO-BIT BRAINS DROP MY OPTION!

CALM DOWN, BRUNO. THERE'LL BE OTHER CONTRACTS FOR YOU... AFTER THE SCANDAL DIES DOWN! YOU ALMOST KILLED THAT MAN AND THE PUBLIC'S RESENTFUL...

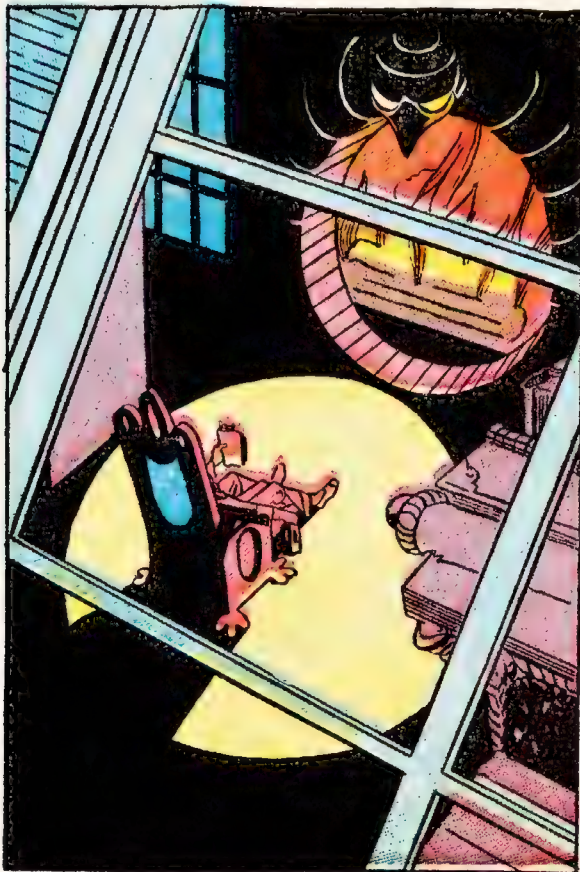
THAT'S FOR THE BIRDS, JUSTIN! MY FANS LIKE ME BRUTAL...AND GRUE-SOME! THEY GO FOR THAT BLOODY STUFF! JUST LOOK AT THE PARTS I'VE PLAYED...QUASIMODO...THE GORGON...
DEATH!



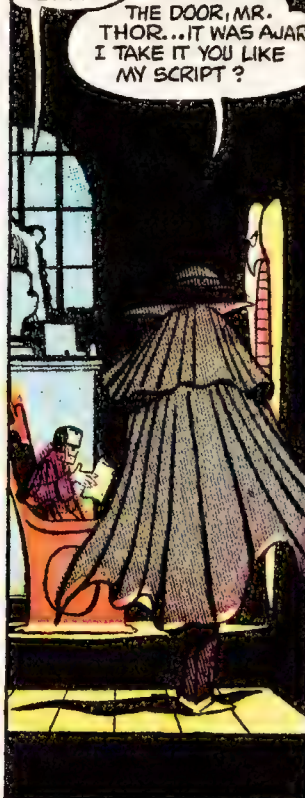


HIS EYES BUGGING WITH AMAZEMENT, BRUNO THOR READ THE STRANGE SCRIPT FAR INTO THE NIGHT. SLOWLY HIS DOUBTS VANISHED, AS HIS EYES SCANNED THE HORROR-CRAMMED PAGES...

oo



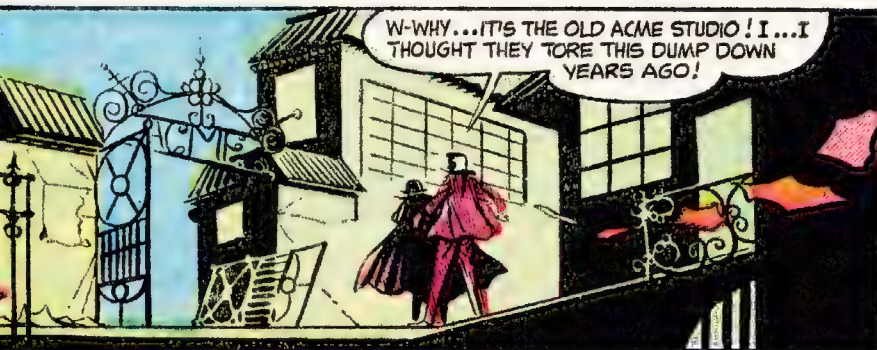
THIS THING'LL BE SOCKO IF THE CENSOR PASSES IT! BRRR...IT MAKES **MY** BLOOD RUN COLD! ONLY TROUBLE IS...WHERE'D THAT LITTLE GUY COME FROM? WHERE ON EARTH DO I CONTACT... **OH! H-HOW-D YOU GET IN?**



IT'S STRICTLY 4 STAR STUFF, FRIEND...WITH **THIS** STORY I'LL SHOW JUSTIN, KANE AND THE REST OF THOSE BOOBS THAT I'M STILL TOP-DOG IN THIS BUSINESS! I'M WILLING TO START WORK TOMORROW!



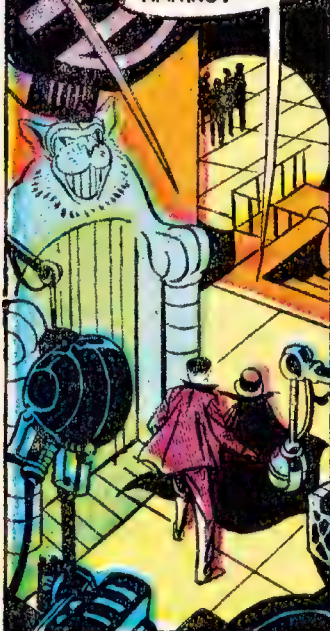
A SHIVER OF DOUBT RAN THROUGH BRUNO THOR'S BODY. BUT THE VISION OF HIMSELF RESTORED TO THE TOP OF HIS PROFESSION ACTED LIKE HEADY WINE. AND SO, GUIDED BY THE LITTLE MAN, HE HURRIED THROUGH THE WIND-LASHED NIGHT...



W-WHY...IT'S THE OLD ACME STUDIO! I...I THOUGHT THEY TORE THIS DUMP DOWN YEARS AGO!

IS *THIS* WHERE WE'RE GONNA SHOOT THE PICTURE, FRIEND? THERE ARE ENOUGH GHOSTS AROUND THIS MAUSOLEUM TO...

GIVES US EXACTLY THE MACABRE MOOD WE'RE AFTER, DON'T YOU THINK? AH...THE OTHERS ARE WAITING.



G-GOOD LORD! IT...IT'S JUSTIN, KANE AND THE OTHERS! WHAT KIND OF GAG...?



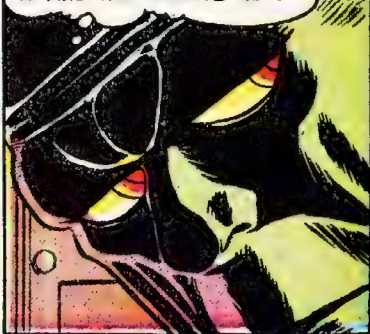
THEY'RE ALL MADE OF PLASTIC...ANOTHER SKILL OF MINE! AND I'VE EQUIPPED THEM TO MOVE AS IF ALIVE...A TRICK WHICH MUST REMAIN MY SECRET! COME...WE'LL DO THE LAST SCENE!

UNCERTAINTY GNAWED AT BRUNO THOR'S BRAIN...THE EERIE SETTING WAS ALMOST TOO MUCH EVEN FOR THE MAN-OF-A-THOUSAND-GRUESOME-FACES. BUT BEFORE HE COULD BACK OUT...

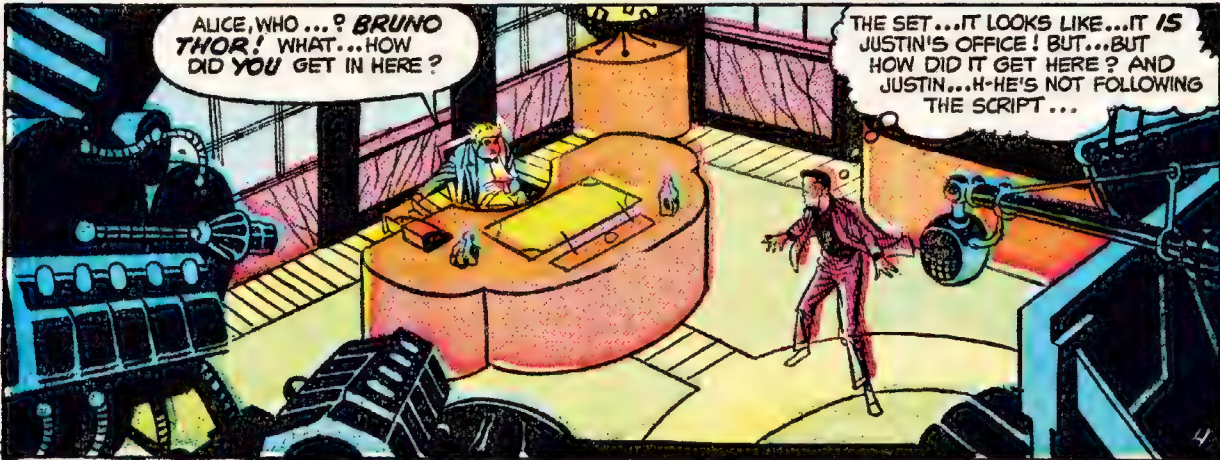


GOT THE PART MEMORIZED, MR. THOR? GOOD! THE SPECIAL THREE-DIMENSIONAL CAMERAS ARE READY TO ROLL!

T-THIS SET-UP IS CRAZY! A TERRIFIC SCRIPT FALLS INTO MY LAP FROM NOWHERE...THE CREEPY GUY WHO DELIVERS IT ALSO MAKES PLASTIC DOUBLES OF MY WORST ENEMIES, DESIGNS THE SETS, FIXES THE LIGHTS AND WORKS THE 3-D CAMERA! ALL *SOLO!* W-WHO THE DEVIL *IS* HE?



Alice, who...? **BRUNO THOR!** WHAT...HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?



THE SET...IT LOOKS LIKE...IT *IS* JUSTIN'S OFFICE! BUT...BUT HOW DID IT GET HERE? AND JUSTIN...H-H-E'S NOT FOLLOWING THE SCRIPT...

THE PLASTIC DUMMY IS SO LIFELIKE I KEEP THINKING OF IT AS JUSTIN **HIMSELF!** HE...**IT...** P-PULLING A GUN! TIME TO JUNK THE SCRIPT AND SAVE MY NECK! THAT...THAT WHISKEY BOTTLE...!



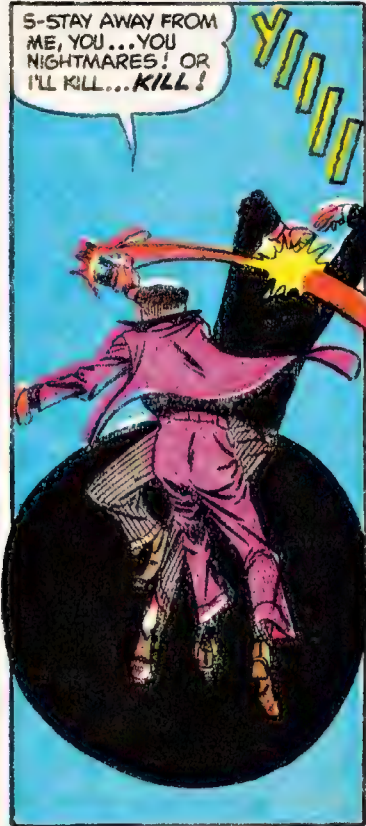
I-IT LOOKS AN AWFUL LOT LIKE THE ONE I TOOK FROM JIMMY'S PLACE! HOW IN HADES DID IT GET **HERE?** **ULP!** T-THAT DUMMY ...OUT TO KILL ME, UNLESS I DEFEND MYSELF!



N-NO... THAT...THAT **MADMAN!** HE'S KILLING MR. JUSTIN WITH THAT AWFUL BOTTLE!



S-STAY AWAY FROM ME, YOU...YOU NIGHTMARES! OR I'LL KILL...**KILL!**



M-MY HEART, ALICE...I'M CHOKING...

MR. CRUMP! HE ...HE'S HAD AN ATTACK! AND THAT INSANE BUTCHER...HE- HE'S COMING FOR ME!



NO SURVIVORS...NOT EVEN TO THIS DREAM, OR WHATEVER IT IS! NO ONE TO TELL WHAT HAPPENED...



ALL RIGHT, LITTLE MAN...NOW IT'S **YOUR** TURN! COME OUT AND TAKE IT...OR I'LL CHASE YOU THROUGH THIS INSANE ASYLUM LIKE A CORNERED RAT!



SPLENDID IMPROMPTU PERFORMANCE, MR. THOR... I HOPE YOU DIDN'T MIND MY ALTERING THE SCRIPT FOR THE SAKE OF SPONTANEITY! COME... I'LL RUN OFF THE FILM FOR YOU!

ANOTHER LITTLE TRICK, MR. THOR... A SECRET OF MINE! NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THE PLASTIC DUMMIES... THEY'VE SERVED THEIR PURPOSE ADMIRABLY. AH... SIT RIGHT DOWN! I'LL RUN THE FILM OFF FOR YOU IMMEDIATELY!

ON A DRUGGED TRANCE, BRUNO SAGGED INTO THE CHAIR. AN EERIE SHAFT OF LIGHT ILLUMINATED THE ROOM AND ONE WALL LEAPED WEIRDLY TO LIFE...

BUT... BUT THIS **CAN'T** BE HAPPENING! HE'S DEVELOPED THE FILMS JUST LIKE HE SAID...

B-BUT IT TAKES HOURS TO DEVELOP THE RUSHES! HOW CAN YOU POSSIBLY..?

IN GAPING FASCINATION, BRUNO WATCHED THE HIDEOUS SCENE REENACTED BEFORE HIS EYES. SUDDENLY HE RECOILED IN VIOLENT DREAD...

THE PLASTIC DUMMIES... THEY'RE UNBELIEVABLY LIFELIKE! I'D SWEAR THAT IT WAS ACTUALLY JUSTIN WHO... **WHAT'S THAT..?** T-TRICKLING FROM THE SCREEN... IT LOOKS LIKE... **BLOOD!**

D-DIPPING FROM THE SCREEN... BUT **HOW?** I-IT'S A TRICK... A TRICK... TO MAKE THE FILM SEEM EVEN MORE THREE DIMENSIONAL! BUT... BUT THIS IS TOO GRISLY, EVEN FOR ME! **STOP THE FILM! STOP IT!**

NOT QUITE YET, MR. BRUNO!

T-THE PICTURE OF ME... IT'S MOVING OUT OF THE SCREEN TOWARD ME! T-THIS IS CRAZY... I-I MUST BE LOSING MY MIND..



K-KEEP AWAY FROM ME...
WHATEVER YOU ARE!
NO 3-D FILM EVER ACTED
LIKE THIS!
M-MY EYES ARE PLAYING
TRICKS ON ME...OR...
OR MY BRAIN!



A SCREAM OF AGONY SHATTERED THE SILENCE, THEN THERE WAS SILENCE. A MOMENT LATER, A FIGURE SUDDENLY MATERIALIZED, AS IF FROM NOWHERE...

OLD RUINS LIKE THIS STUDIO ARE SO DRY, A SINGLE CARELESS MATCH MIGHT START A CONFLAGRATION. A GENUINE FIRE HAZARD...A REAL MENACE...



THE NEXT MORNING, OUTSIDE THE EXECUTIVE OFFICES AT TITAN STUDIOS...

THAT BLAZE LAST NIGHT SURE WRECKED THE SKELETON OF THE OLD ACME PLANT, DIDN'T IT? HEARD THE FIRE ENGINES CLEAR ACROSS TOWN. I'M SORTA WORRIED...NOT LIKE ALICE JUNO TO LEAVE HER DESK LAMP BURNING ALL NIGHT. C'MON, JANITOR...OPEN MR. JUSTIN'S DOOR!



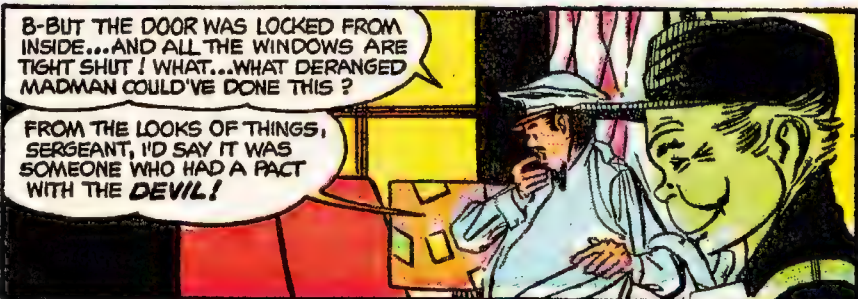
MON JUSTIN
STUDIO
SUPERVISOR

MUSTA BEEN AN ALL NIGHT CONFERENCE, IF YOU ASK ME. MR. JUSTIN DOESN'T OFTEN...
G-GOOD GOD! J-JUSTIN...KANE...
CRUMP...ALICE...HACKED TO DEATH!



B-BUT THE DOOR WAS LOCKED FROM INSIDE...AND ALL THE WINDOWS ARE TIGHT SHUT! WHAT...WHAT DERANGED MADMAN COULD'VE DONE THIS?

FROM THE LOOKS OF THINGS, SERGEANT, I'D SAY IT WAS SOMEONE WHO HAD A PACT WITH THE DEVIL!

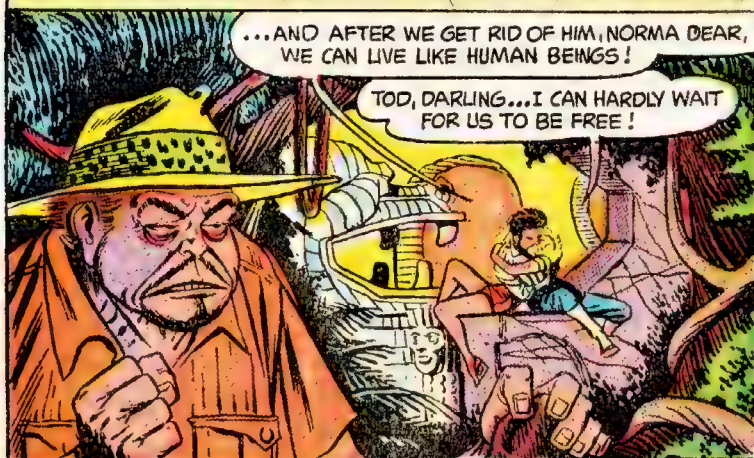


The End

MIKE PERRY WANTED VENGEANCE ON HIS WIFE AND THE MAN WHO HAD STOLEN HER AFFECTIONS. WHAT IT LED TO WAS A...

TRIPLE-HEADER!

IT ALL HAPPENED QUITE ACCIDENTALLY, WHEN MIKE PERRY SAW HIS WIFE AND TOD CROSS MAKING PLANS FOR A FUTURE WHICH DID NOT INCLUDE HIM.



B-BUT...HOW CAN WE EVER RID OURSELVES OF MIKE? AS LONG AS HE LIVES HE'LL KEEP US APART!

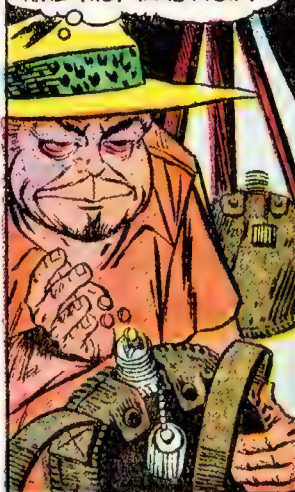
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT, BABY! I'VE ALREADY MADE ARRANGEMENTS TO...ER...ER... ELIMINATE THAT HUSBAND OF YOURS!



SLIPPING BACK TO THEIR JUNGLE CAMP, AN INFURIATED MIKE PERRY MADE HIS OWN ARRANGEMENTS...



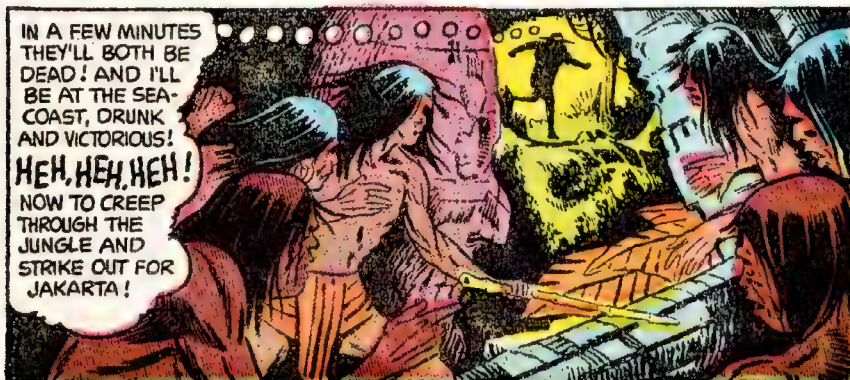
A HANDFUL IN TOD'S CANTEN...ANOTHER HANDFUL IN NORMA'S...AND I SNEAK AWAY AND LET THE POISON GO TO WORK THE FIRST TIME THEY TAKE A SIP!



REPLACING THE POISONED CANTEENS, VENGEFUL MIKE PERRY PREPARES TO DEPART...



IN A FEW MINUTES THEY'LL BOTH BE DEAD! AND I'LL BE AT THE SEA-COAST, DRUNK AND VICTORIOUS! HEH, HEH, HEH! NOW TO CREEP THROUGH THE JUNGLE AND STRIKE OUT FOR JAKARTA!



A FEW MINUTES LATER, BACK AT THE DOOMED JUNGLE CAMP...



THAT'S IT, DARLING...DRINK HEARTY. WE'VE GOT A LONG TRIP AHEAD OF US...AND WE'LL BE TRAVELING FAST AND SILENTLY TO ESCAPE FROM MIKE!

T-THAT WATER, TOD...IT TASTES...TASTES F-FUNNY! MY THROAT...BURNING... EVERYTHING'S SPINNING MADLY...



I-I FEEL AS IF...I'M B-BURNING UP... AIEEE!

S-SOMEBODY... PUT IN OUR CANTEENS... DOSE OF P-POISON!



TWO DAYS LATER, IN A PRIMITIVE JUNGLE VILLAGE, A WEIRD PROCESSION ENTERS A HUT...



PUT IN HERE THE BODIES YOU FOUND IN THE WHITE MAN'S CAMP! AND AS I PROMISED, I WILL PAY YOU WELL!

FOR THE BODIES OF THE WHITE MASTERS...I PAY IN THE WHITE MASTERS' OWN COINS! AFTER I HAVE FINISHED WITH THESE TWO THEY WILL MAKE A FINE MATCH FOR THE ONE I OPERATED ON JUST YESTERDAY!



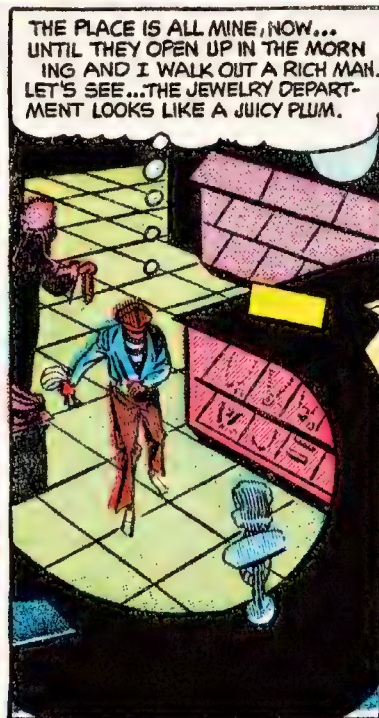
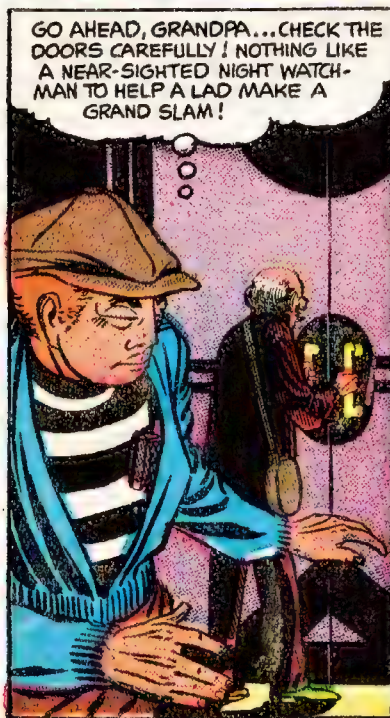
...THE MAN WE WERE PAID TO KILL, ON THE ROAD TO THE SEACOAST TOWN CALLED JAKARTA! YES, A FINE SET! VERY PRETTY, ARE THEY NOT?

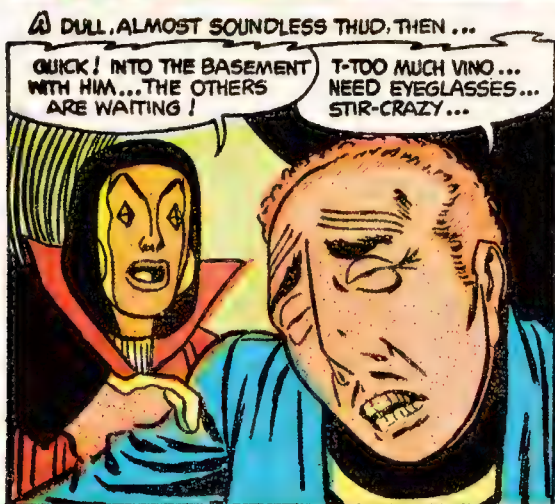
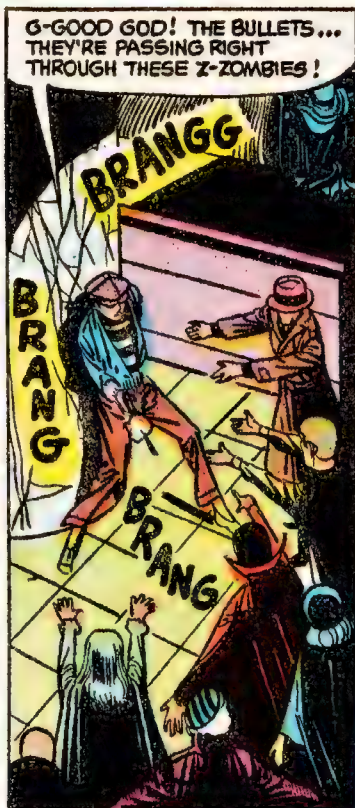


LET'S FACE IT, FRIENDS! IN THIS TIME OF SHRUNKEN VALUES YOU COULDN'T WANT MORE OF A BARGAIN! IF YOU'RE INTERESTED, TAKE A CANOE DOWN THE AMAZON AND HEAD INLAND FROM JAKARTA...

THE SCHEME WAS FOOLPROOF AND DEVILISHLY INGENIOUS... TRULY OUT OF THIS WORLD. BUT BETWEEN GARY CONRAD AND SUCCESS STOOD...

THE NIGHT PEOPLE





ALMOST FAINT WITH FEAR,
GARY CONRAD WAS APPALLED
TO SEE A NEEDLE PLUNGED
INTO HIS WRITHING FLESH ...

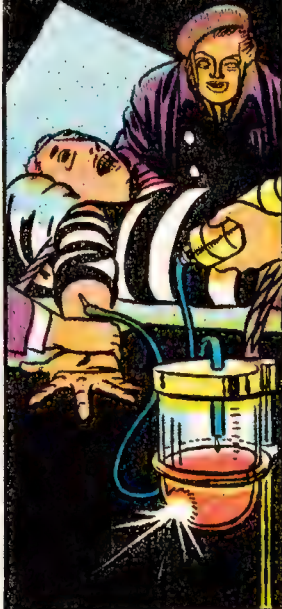
K-KEEP AWAY FROM ME,
YOU GHOULS! YOU'RE JUST
MY IMAGINATION WORKING
OVERTIME! YOU'RE JUST...
ARGHHHHH!

AH! GOT THE VEIN
VERY FIRST TRY!



MY...MY
BLOOD!
T-THEY'RE
DRAINING
IT INTO
THAT
BOTTLE!

SEE HOW IT
SPARKLES...
HOW IT GLEAMS
LIKE LIQUID
FLAME! QUICK...
GET THE WINE
GLASSES FROM
THE CHINAWARE
DEPARTMENT!



DROP BY DROP, THE LIFE FLUID DRAINED FROM GARY CONRAD'S
TORTURED BODY. THEN, AGHAST, HE WATCHED AS...

A TOAST, MY
FRIENDS! TO THE
FIRST VISITOR WE'VE
DINED ON IN MONTHS!

DELICIOUS! THE HEADIEST BREW
I'VE TASTED IN THE DEVIL KNOWS
HOW LONG! **SUPERB!**



THE PASSING HOURS WERE A HIDEOUS BLUR
TO GARY CONRAD, AS THE GHASTLY MANIKINS
DRANK THEMSELVES INTO A WILD FRENZY.
SUDDENLY...

IT ISN'T OFTEN WE NIGHT PEOPLE GET A
CHANCE TO HOLD A WINGDING LIKE
THIS! WE OUGHTA DO THIS MORE OFTEN...
MAYBE TRAP A FEW LATE CUSTOMERS,
EH? **HEE HEE HEEE!**

HURRY...ONLY TEN MINUTES TILL
THE STORE OPENS! TAKE YOUR
REGULAR PLACES BEFORE THE
SALESGIRLS GET HERE!

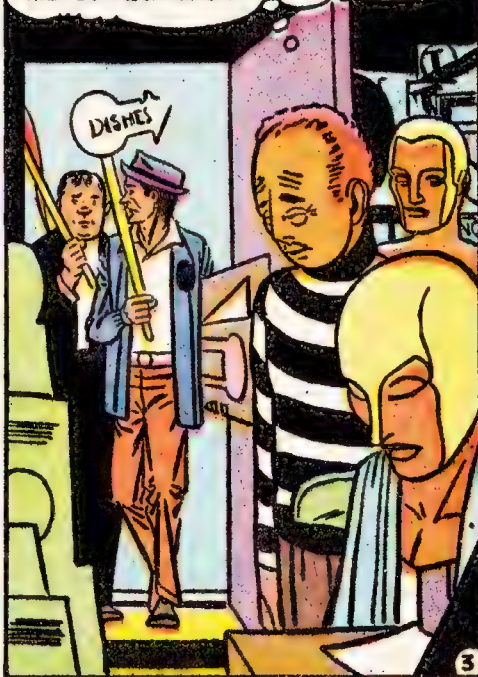


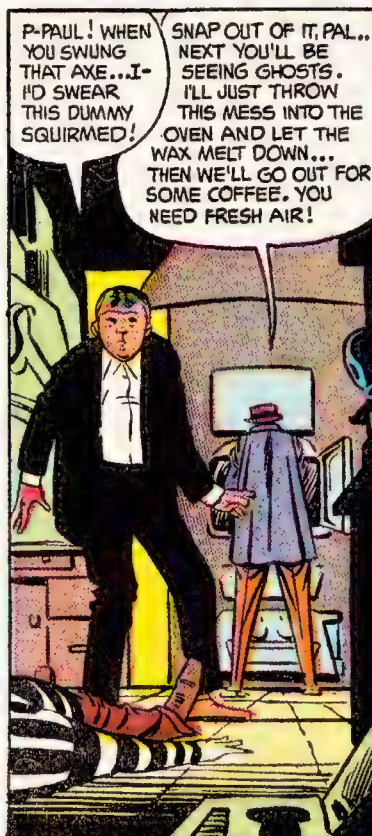
NOT A SECOND TO LOSE...
GET THE NEWCOMER OFF
THE TABLE AND THROW HIM
INTO THE REPAIR SHOP
WHILE I CLEAN UP THIS
MESS! AND BE SURE TO
WIPE THE BLOOD OFF
YOUR FACES...MIGHT
AROUSE THE SUSPICIONS
OF THE CURSED DAY
PEOPLE!



POWERLESS TO RESIST, GARY CONRAD WAS
DRAGGED TO A ROOM FILLED WITH MANIKINS.
MINUTES PASSED BEFORE...

T-THEY'RE HOLDING ME PRISONER! IF..IF I
DON'T GET TO A DOCTOR FAST I'M A GONER!
T-THOSE MEN...THEY'RE **ALIVE...**
THEY'LL UNDERSTAND!







STRANGE
SUSPENSE STORIES

No 18

STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION

10¢



IT WAS AN INCREDIBLE MYSTERY THAT BAFFLED THE CITIZENS OF TWIN PINES...A PUZZLE THAT DROVE ZACH MARROW TO THE EDGE OF MADNESS. EVERYONE IN TOWN WAS FASCINATED BY THE WEIRD ENIGMA BUT, MOST OF ALL, ZACH YEARNED TO SOLVE THE GROTESQUE RIDDLE OF...

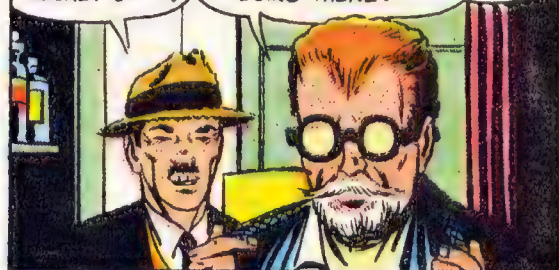
What was in Sam Dora's Box?

FROM THE LOOKS OF THIS BLOODY KNIFE, ZACH'S BUTCHERED SOMEONE! GOTTA GIVE HIM A THIRD-DEGREE...

AFRAID IT'S TOO LATE...ZACH MARROW'S DEAD! AND I THINK I KNOW WHO HIS VICTIM IS! I'VE GOT A HUNCH THAT ZACH FINALLY SOLVED THE SECRET OF WHAT'S IN SAM DORA'S BOX!

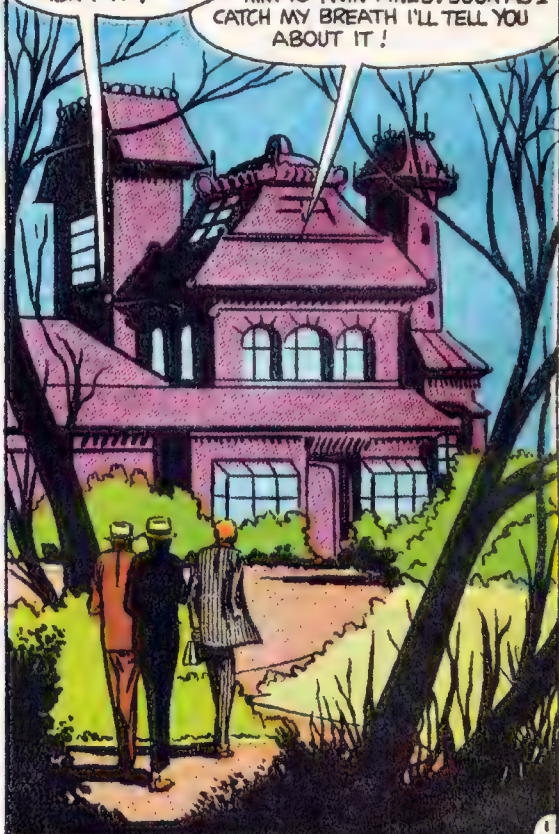
Y-YOU KNOW WHO HE KILLED, DOC? C'MON... DON'T MAKE A SECRET OF IT!

SOON AS I PUT ON SOME CLOTHES, BOYS. I'LL SHOW YOU THE SCENE OF THE MURDER...AND TELL YOU A GHASTLY STORY WHILE WE'RE GOING THERE!



T-THE OLD SPOONER PLACE, EH? THIS IS WHERE THAT CREEPY SAM DORA STAYED, ISN'T IT?

YEP... EVER SINCE HE CAME TO TOWN SIX MONTHS AGO. I OUGHT TO KNOW...I SENT THE LETTER THAT BROUGHT HIM TO TWIN PINES. SOON AS I CATCH MY BREATH I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT IT!

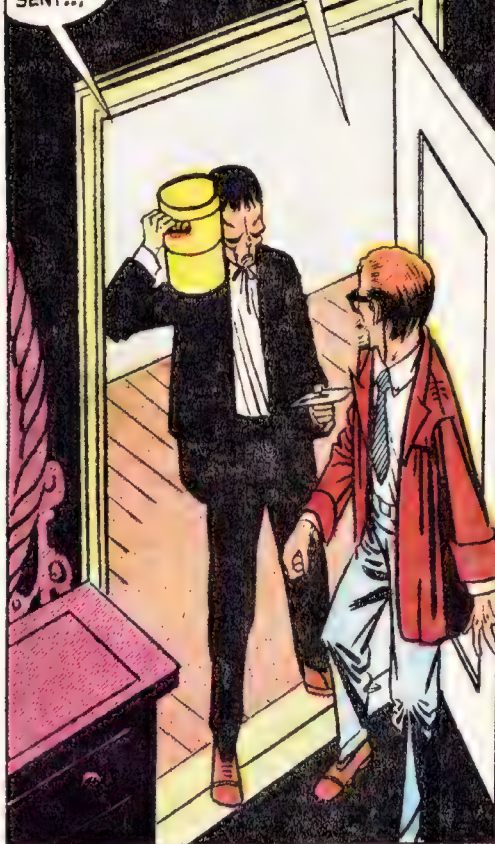




"AS I PLODDED TOWARD THE MOULDERING OLD SPOONER PLACE WITH NUMBED FOOTSTEPS, I BEGAN TO SPEAK OF THE MOMENT SIX MONTHS BEFORE, WHEN THE TRAGEDY STARTED, IT WAS LATE AT NIGHT..."

YOU'RE DOC CLEVE, AIN'T YOU? I JUST GOT THIS LETTER YOU SENT...

T-THEN YOU...YOU'RE MARTHA AND FRED SPOONER'S SON! THE ONE WHO WAS SENT AWAY YEARS AGO FOR...UH...OBSERVATION? THE ONE WHO CHANGED HIS NAME TO SAM DORA?



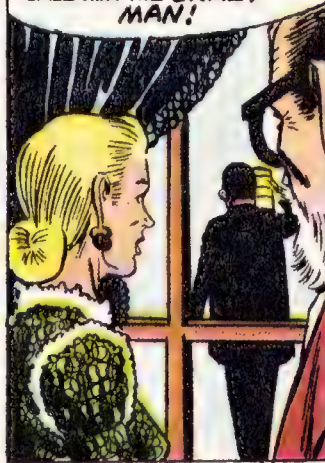
THAT'S ME, ALL RIGHT. JUST PULLED INTO TOWN...

W-WELCOME TO TWIN PINES, SAM. THAT LETTER I SENT YOU...IT WAS YOUR MOTHER'S DYING WISH. COME ON INSIDE...AND DON'T BE AFRAID TO TALK TO ME, SAM. MARTHA AND FRED TOLD ME ALL ABOUT...ER...IT!



"PERHAPS I SHOULD'VE TOLD EVERYONE IN TOWN ABOUT SAM'S SECRET...WARNED THEM...BUT SOMEHOW I COULDN'T FORCE MYSELF TO! IT WAS SO GHASTLY THAT SAM WOULD'VE **KILLED** TO KEEP FOLKS FROM FINDING OUT..."

HE'S ASKING FOR TROUBLE, DOC...ALWAYS TOTING THAT FOOL BOX ON HIS SHOULDER! THE KIDS ARE BEGINNING TO CALL HIM THE **CRAZY MAN!**



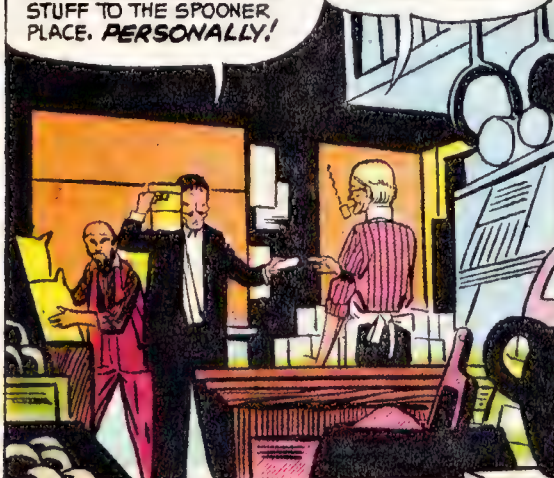
THAT GUY'S BEGINNING TO GET ON MY NERVES...AND THAT WEIRD BOX HE'S ALWAYS CARTING AROUND IS **CREEPY!** WHATTA YOU SUPPOSE HE'S GOT IN THERE?

SEARCH ME! WHATEVER IT IS MUST BE MIGHTY VALUABLE! THE WAY HE DON'T NEVER LET GO OF IT!



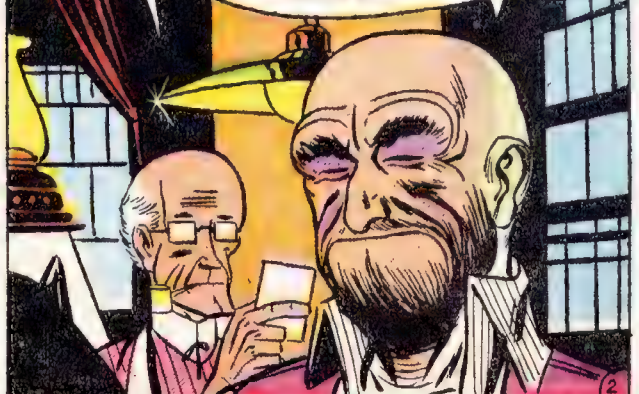
HERE'S MY WEEK'S ORDER, MR. CHART! FILL IT SOON AS YOU CAN AND DELIVER THE STUFF TO THE SPOONER PLACE. **PERSONALLY!**

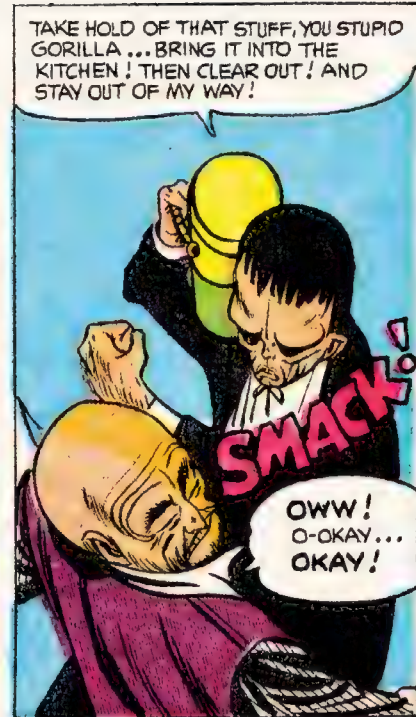
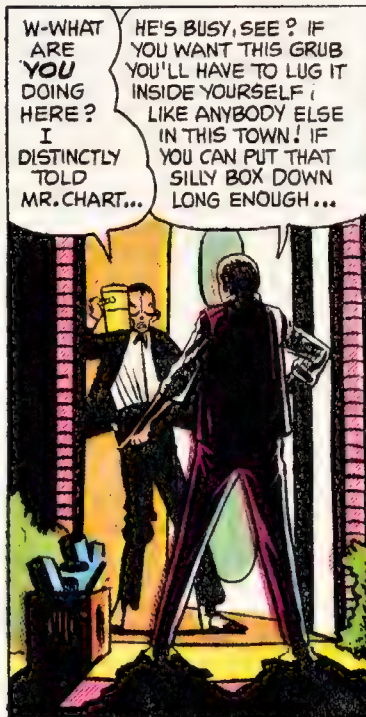
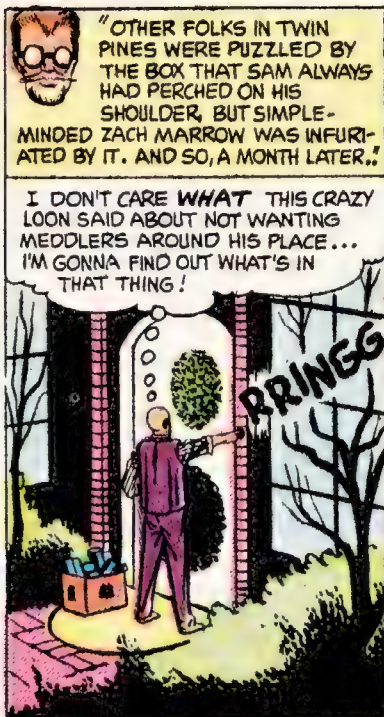
S-SURE, MR. DORA! I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT RIGHT AWAY!



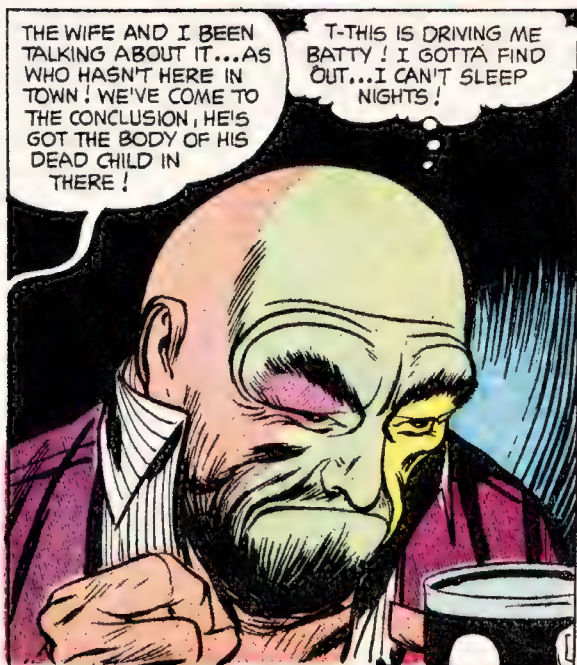
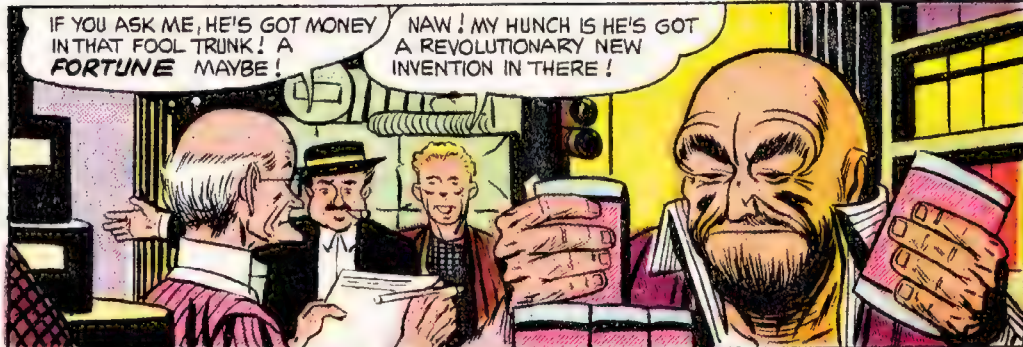
FILL THIS ORDER IMMEDIATELY, ZACH. I'LL RUN IT OVER AS SOON AS IT'S READY.

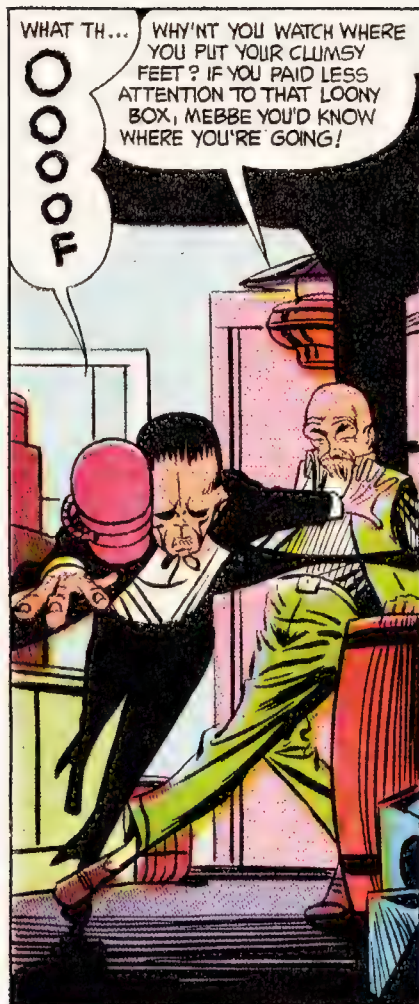
WHO'S THAT GUY THINK HE IS, MR. CHART? I DELIVER ALL YOUR GROCERIES...AIN'T I GOOD ENOUGH FOR THAT ZOMBIE? HE'S GOT SOME NERVE...A NUT LIKE HIM ASKING FOR **PERSONAL SERVICE!**





"THE WEEKS PASSED AND NEVER DID ANY-ONE SEE SAM DORA WITHOUT THAT WEIRD BOX CLINGING TO HIS SHOULDER, WHILE OTHERS TALKED OCCASIONALLY OF THE MYSTERY, IT OCCUPIED ZACH'S MIND INCESSANTLY..."



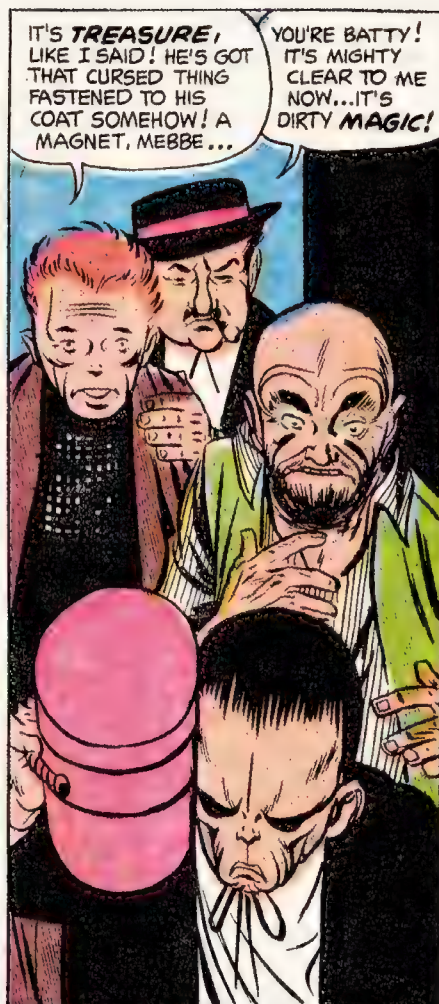


WHAT TH... WHY'NT YOU WATCH WHERE YOU PUT YOUR CLUMSY FEET? IF YOU PAID LESS ATTENTION TO THAT LOONY BOX, MEBBE YOU'D KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING!



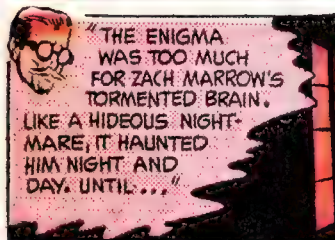
T-THE BOX...IT'S STILL ON HIS SHOULDER!

IT D-DIDN'T FALL, EVEN WITH HIS HANDS NOT HOLDING IT!

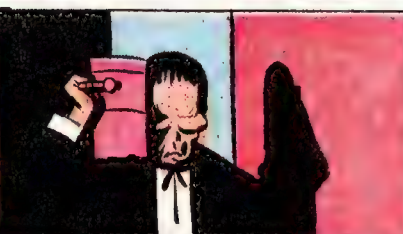


IT'S **TREASURE**, LIKE I SAID! HE'S GOT THAT CURSED THING FASTENED TO HIS COAT SOMEHOW! A MAGNET, MEBBE...

YOU'RE BATTY! IT'S MIGHTY CLEAR TO ME NOW...IT'S DIRTY **MAGIC**!



"THE ENIGMA WAS TOO MUCH FOR ZACH MARROW'S TORMENTED BRAIN. LIKE A HIDEOUS NIGHTMARE, IT HAUNTED HIM NIGHT AND DAY. UNTIL..."



HERE COMES THE FILTHY DEVIL NOW! THIS TIME HE WON'T GET AWAY... EVEN IF I HAVE TO **KILL HIM**!

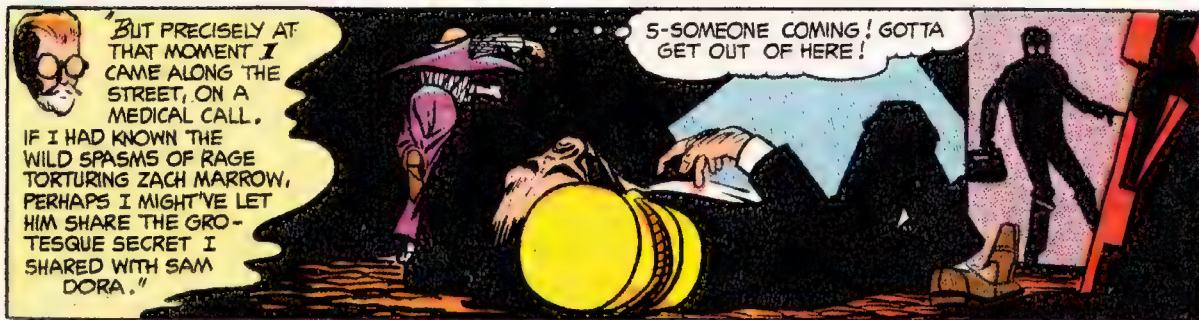


NOW I'M GONNA FIND OUT WHAT'S IN THAT LOUSY THING ON YOUR SHOULDER!

W-WHO'S... **ARGHHHH !!**



I-I CAN'T PRY THE CRUMMY THING LOOSE! AND THE LID...IT'S SHUT SO TIGHT I CAN'T BUDGE IT! I'LL GET IT OPEN, EVEN IF I HAVE TO CUT IT OFF!



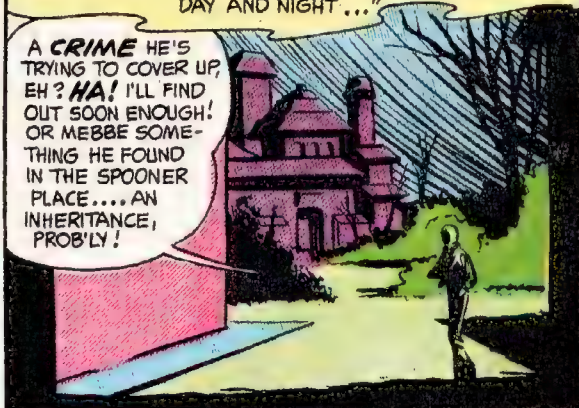
"BUT PRECISELY AT THAT MOMENT I CAME ALONG THE STREET, ON A MEDICAL CALL. IF I HAD KNOWN THE WILD SPASMS OF RAGE TORTURING ZACH MARROW, PERHAPS I MIGHT'VE LET HIM SHARE THE GRO- TESQUE SECRET I SHARED WITH SAM DORA."

"MORE AND MORE, THE TOWNSPEOPLE AVOIDED SAM DORA, SPEAKING OF HIM WITH MOUNTING DREAD, IN FRIGHTENED WHISPERS. BUT, TO ZACH, THE HORRIBLE BOX HAD BECOME A TORMENT THAT MOCKED HIM AROUND THE CLOCK..."



AIN'T YOU HAD ENOUGH TO DRINK, ZACH? IT'S BEEN THREE HOURS... SHUT UP AND BRING ME ... HIC... ANOTHER BOTTLE!

"SAM'S HOLING UP IN HIS PLACE AND RARELY VENTURING OUT ANYMORE MUST'VE BEEN THE LAST STRAW TO ZACH. HIS EYES GLITTERED WITH FIERY RAGE AS HE WALKED THE STREETS DAY AND NIGHT..."



A CRIME HE'S TRYING TO COVER UP, EH? HA! I'LL FIND OUT SOON ENOUGH! OR MEBBE SOMETHING HE FOUND IN THE SPOONER PLACE... AN INHERITANCE, PROB'LY!

"TONIGHT HE COULD STAND IT NO LONGER. SOMEHOW HE MANAGED TO CRAWL INTO THE SPOONER PLACE..."



W-WHO ...WHO'S THERE? EVEN SLEEPS WITH THAT CURSED THING ON HIS SHOULDER, DOES HE? MUST BE WORTH A MILLION DOLLARS... IN ANOTHER MINUTE IT'LL BE MINE!

N-NO... PLEASE! DON'T... DON'T... ARGH!

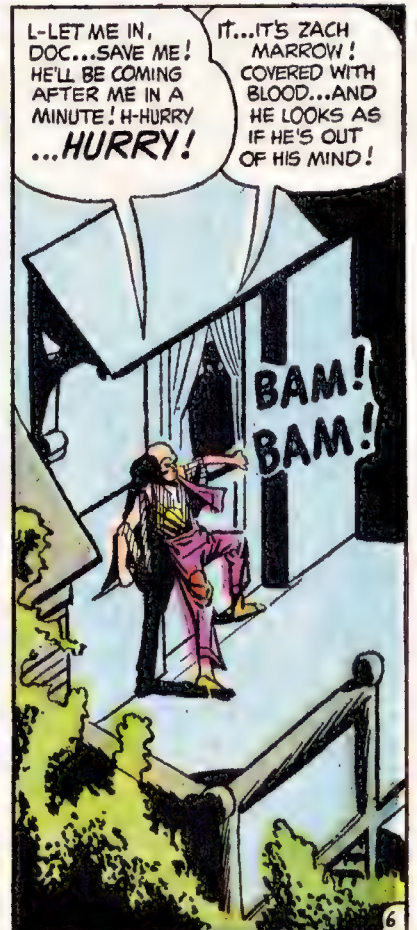
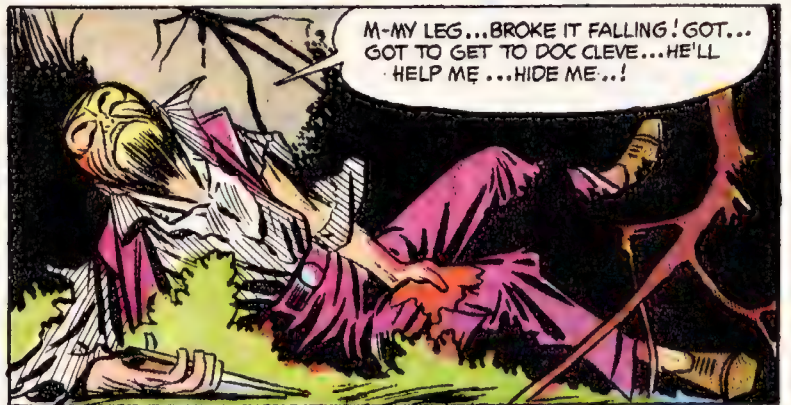
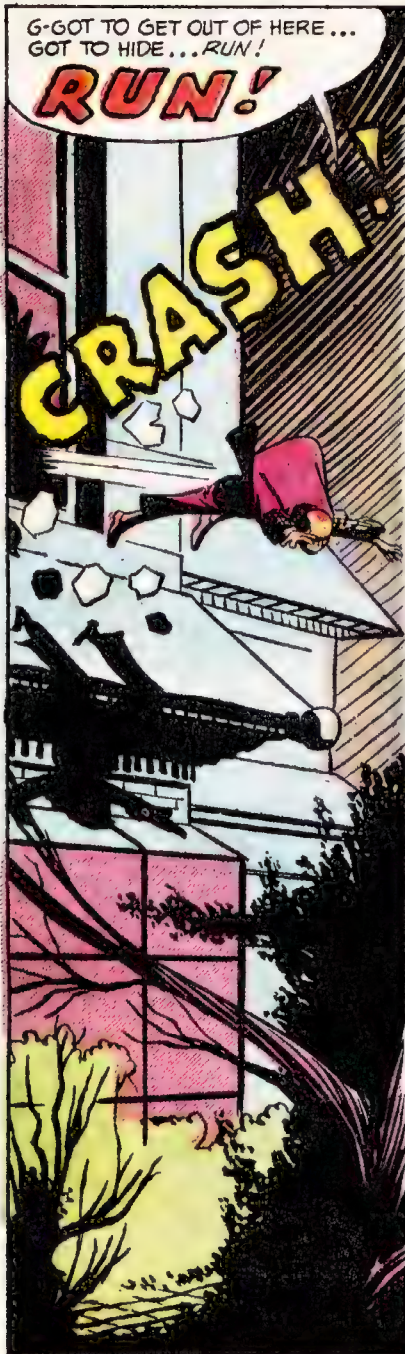
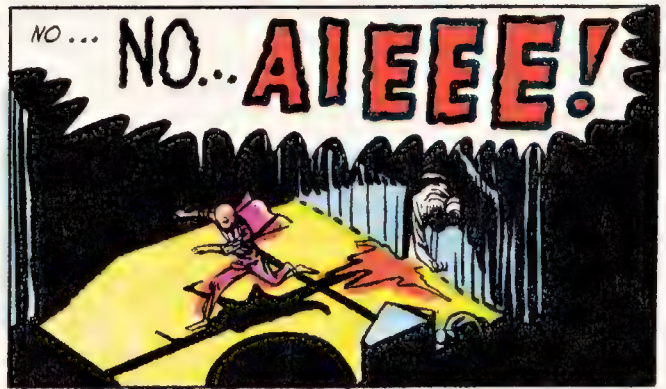
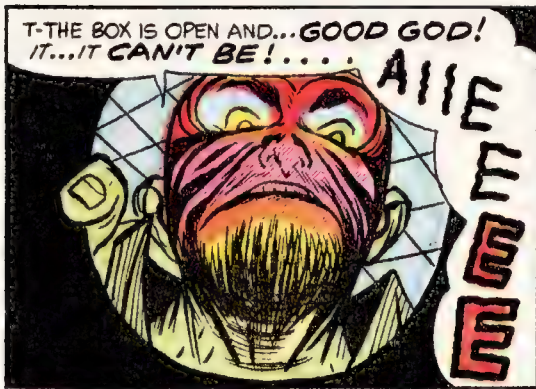


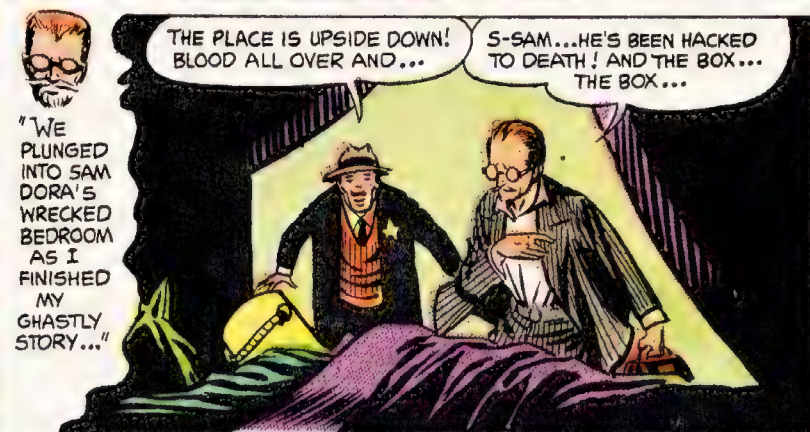
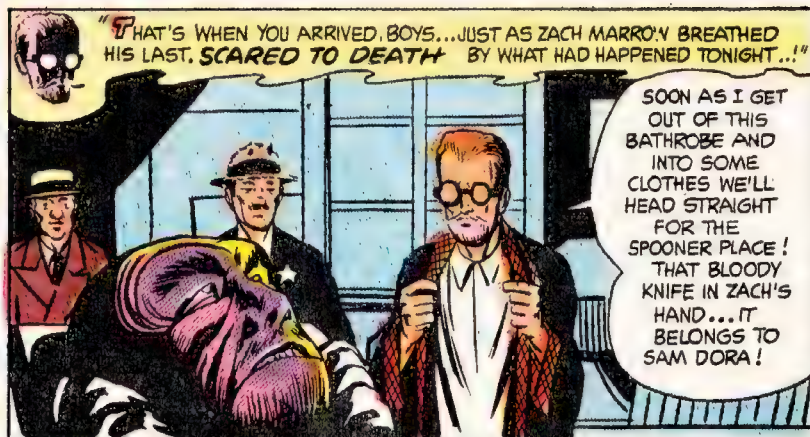
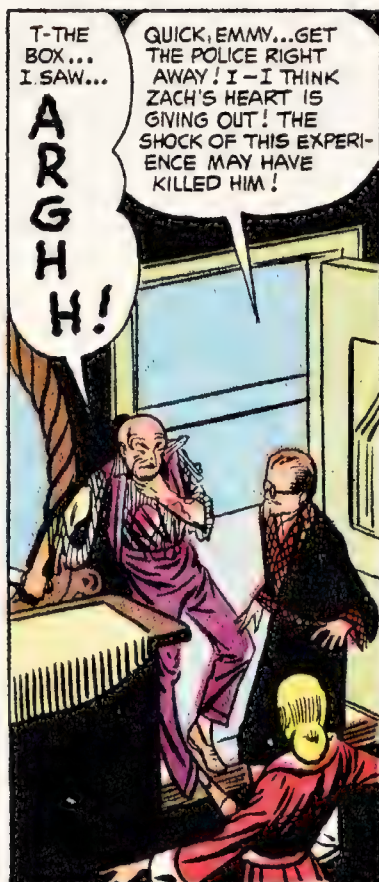
I'LL HACK IT OFF WITH YOUR OWN KNIFE ...RIP IT OPEN WITH MY BARE HANDS! IT'LL BE MINE ... MINE ... HA HA HA!!

IT...IT'S STARTING TO LOOSEN! IN ANOTHER SECOND I'LL KNOW ... I'LL KNOW WHAT HIS SECRET IS! HA, HA!

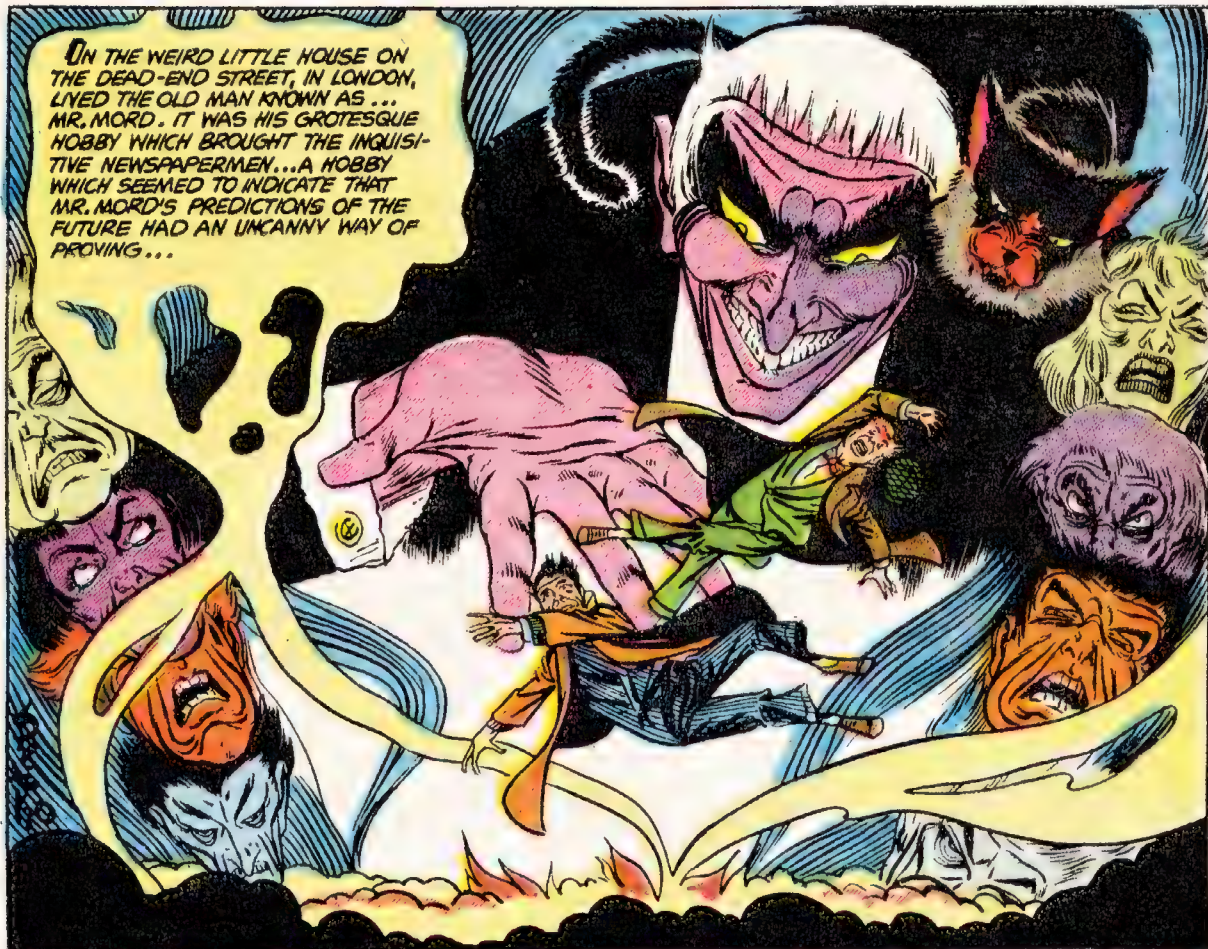


HAAAAA!





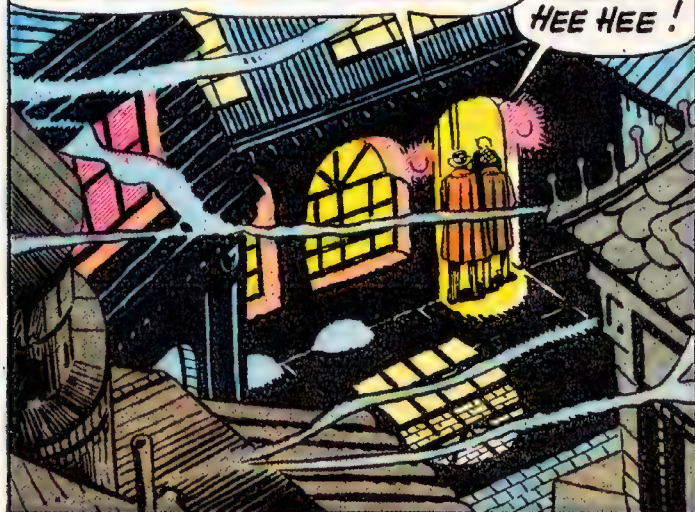
ON THE WEIRD LITTLE HOUSE ON THE DEAD-END STREET, IN LONDON, LIVED THE OLD MAN KNOWN AS ... MR. MORD. IT WAS HIS GROTESQUE HOBBY WHICH BROUGHT THE INQUISITIVE NEWSPAPERMEN...A HOBBY WHICH SEEMED TO INDICATE THAT MR. MORD'S PREDICTIONS OF THE FUTURE HAD AN UNKANNNY WAY OF PROVING...



DEAD RIGHT!

I'M SAM DRAKE OF THE HERALD-NEWS, MR. MORD ...HEARD A REPORT THAT YOU'VE GOT A STRANGE HOBBY WHICH MIGHT ENTERTAIN OUR READERS!

YES! COME IN, GENTLEMEN...
COME IN!
HEE HEE!

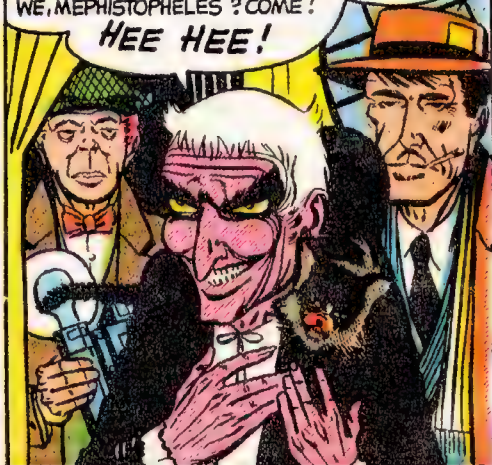


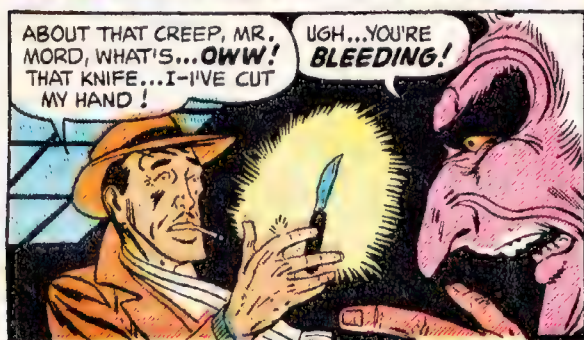
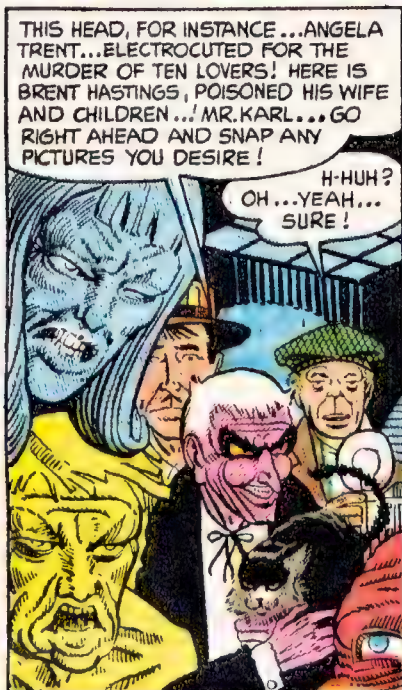
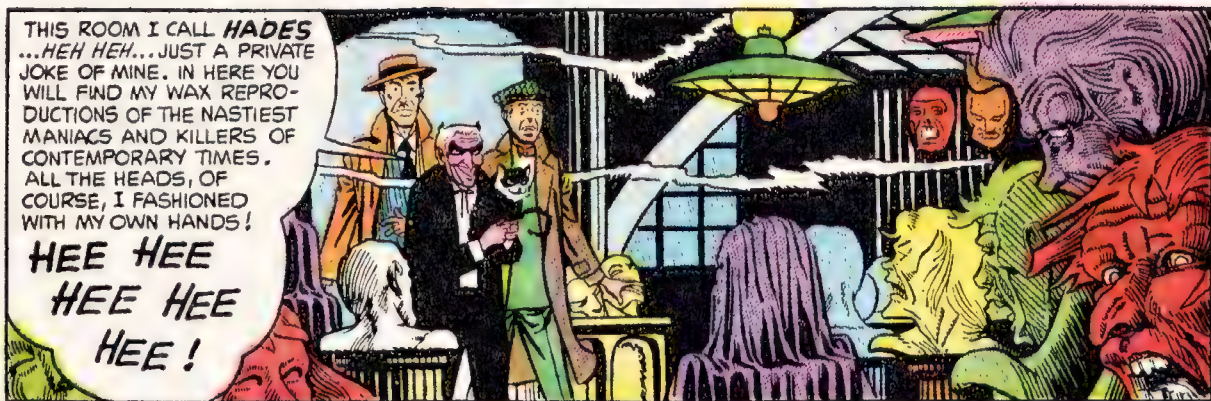
MY HOCUS-FOCUS MAN HERE IS KEN KARL. LIKE TO GET SOME INFORMATION FROM YOU, WHILE KEN SNAPS SOME PICTURES OF YOUR JOI...ER...

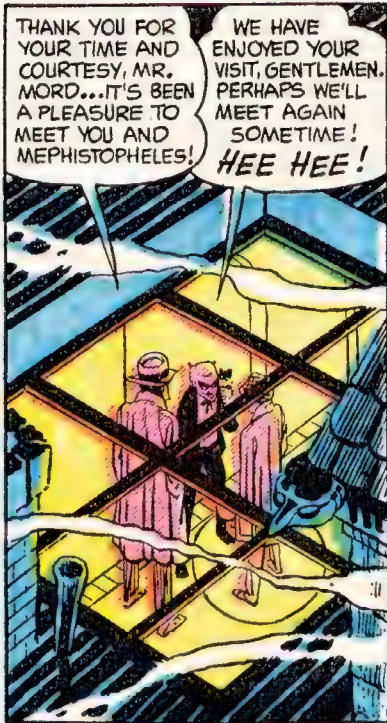
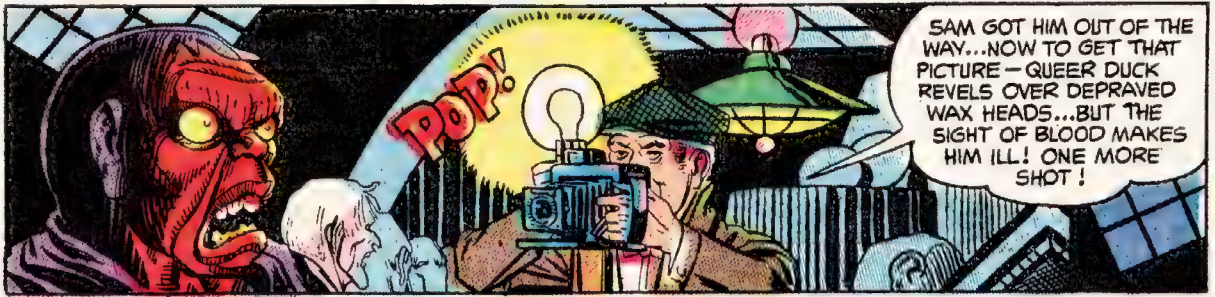
WE'D BE DELIGHTED, WOULDN'T WE, MEPHISTOPHELES? COME!

HOME!

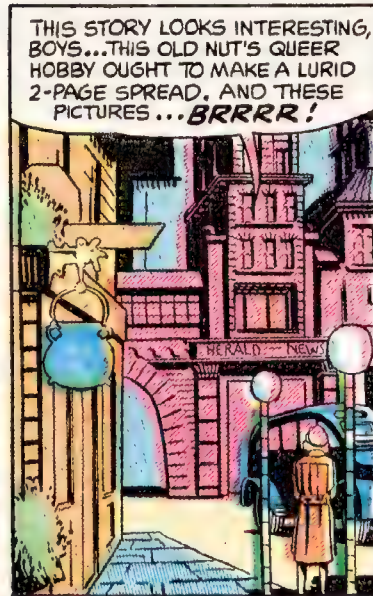
HEE HEE!





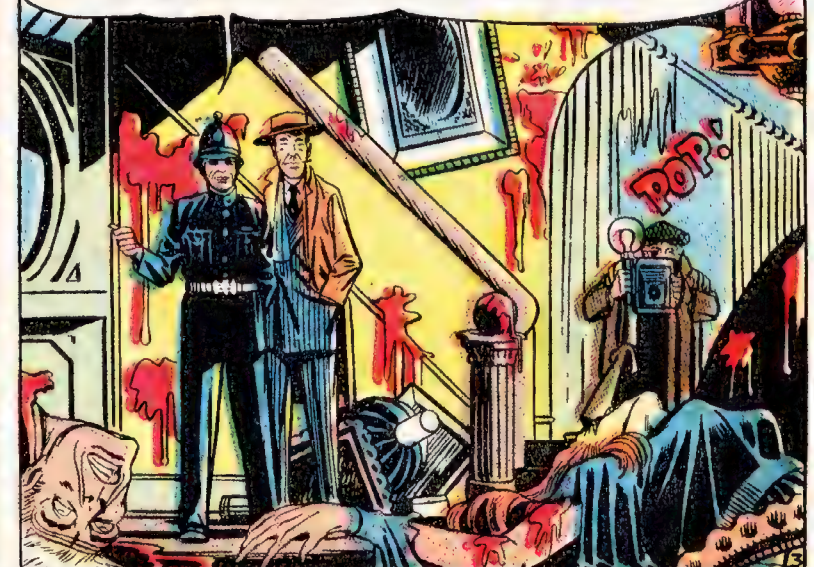


WITH A FEELING OF DREAD, THE NEWSPAPERMEN HURRIED TO THE HERALD-NEWS' OFFICE, WHERE THE BIZARRE STORY WAS WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHS DEVELOPED. THE NEXT DAY...



A FEW MINUTES LATER, A BLOOD-CHILLING SIGHT GREETED THE TWO REPORTERS

THIS KILLER IS SORT OF AN IMBECILE. THE FAMILY KEPT HIM LOCKED UP IN A ROOM, ALL BY HIMSELF! AN HOUR AGO HE BUSTED LOOSE AND WENT TO WORK ON EVERYBODY IN SIGHT WITH AN AX HE PICKED UP. THEY GOT HIM STRAPPED UP WAITING FOR THE NUT WAGON!



TELL ME THE TRUTH, BOYS...YOU EVER SEE ANYTHING AS HIDEOUS AS HIM?

G-GOOD LORD! THAT...THAT FACE...!

G-GOOD LORD!
THAT...THAT
FACE...!

SAM DRAKE AND HIS PHOTOGRAPHER RACED FRANTICALLY ACROSS TOWN...AND SOON...

Panel 1: A man in a suit (Sam Drake) is running across a cobblestone street. A speech bubble from him says: "AH! THE JOURNALISTS HAVE RETURNED. IS THERE ANYTHING **I**...?". A photographer in a trench coat is running towards him, holding a camera. A speech bubble from the photographer says: "Y-YOU SURE **CAN**, MR. MORD! ANSWER SOME QUESTIONS...AND TAKE A LOOK AT THIS.". In the background, there are buildings and a large, stylized sun or moon.

AH! THE JOURNALISTS HAVE RETURNED. IS THERE ANYTHING **I**...?

Y-YOU SURE **CAN**, MR. MORD! ANSWER
SOME QUESTIONS...AND TAKE A LOOK
AT THIS.

THIS PICTURE OF YOUR "IMAGINATION"...KARL SNAPPED IT WHILE I DECEYED YOU WITH THAT KNIFE-CUT! IT'S AN EXACT DUPLICATE OF A MANIAC WHO WENT BERSERK *THIS AFTERNOON...* BUT YOU DID IT *BEFORE THE MURDERS!*



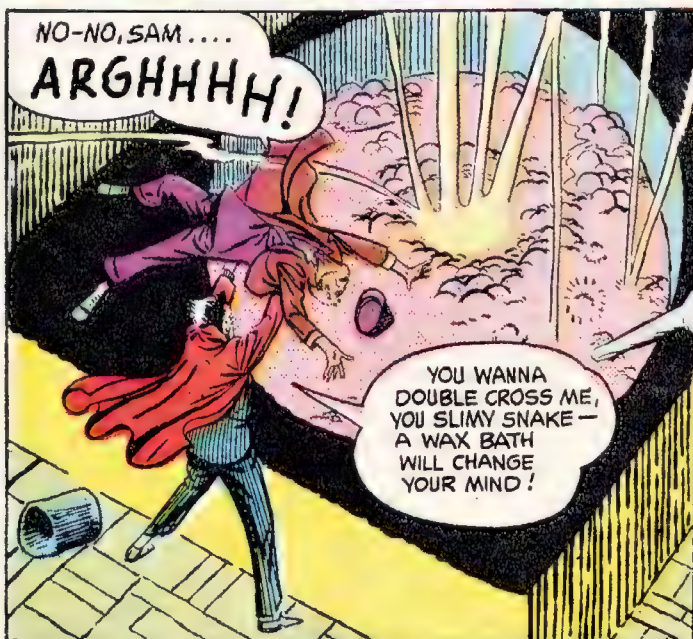
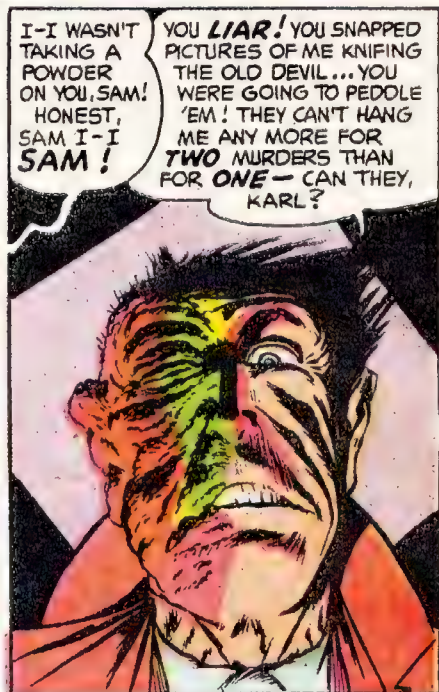
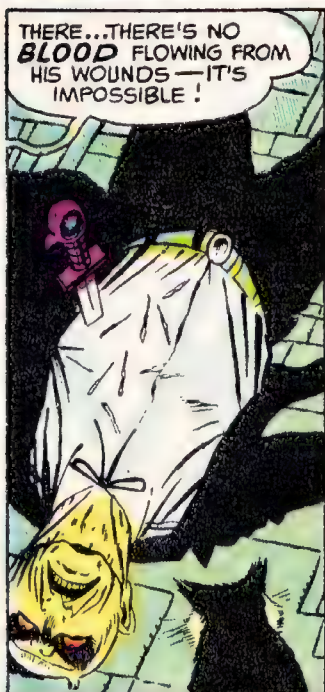
YOU **FOOLS...**
YOU TOOK THAT
PICTURE AFTER
I WARNED YOU!
NOW YOU'LL PAY
FOR YOUR CURSED
SNOOPING... BOTH
YOUR LIVES WILL BE
FORFEITED!

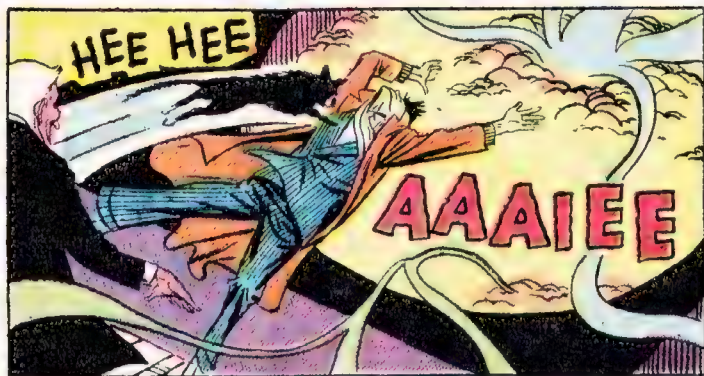
DON'T MAKE ME
LAUGH, GRANDPOP!
WHO THE DEVIL DO
YOU THINK YOU ARE,
ANYWAY?...SOME
SORT OF
OMNIPOTENT
DEVIL?



**DON'T MAKE ME
LAUGH, GRANDPOP!
WHO THE DEVIL DO
YOU THINK YOU ARE,
ANYWAY?..SOME
SORT OF
OMNIPOTENT
DEVIL?**

A COLD, DEADLY SMILE CREEPS OVER MR. MORD'S FACE — HE RAISED HIS HAND — FLICKED HIS FINGER AND —







RACKET SQUAD

No. 11

TELEVISION'S TOP-RANKING EXPOSES

RACKET SQUAD

IN ACTION

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION



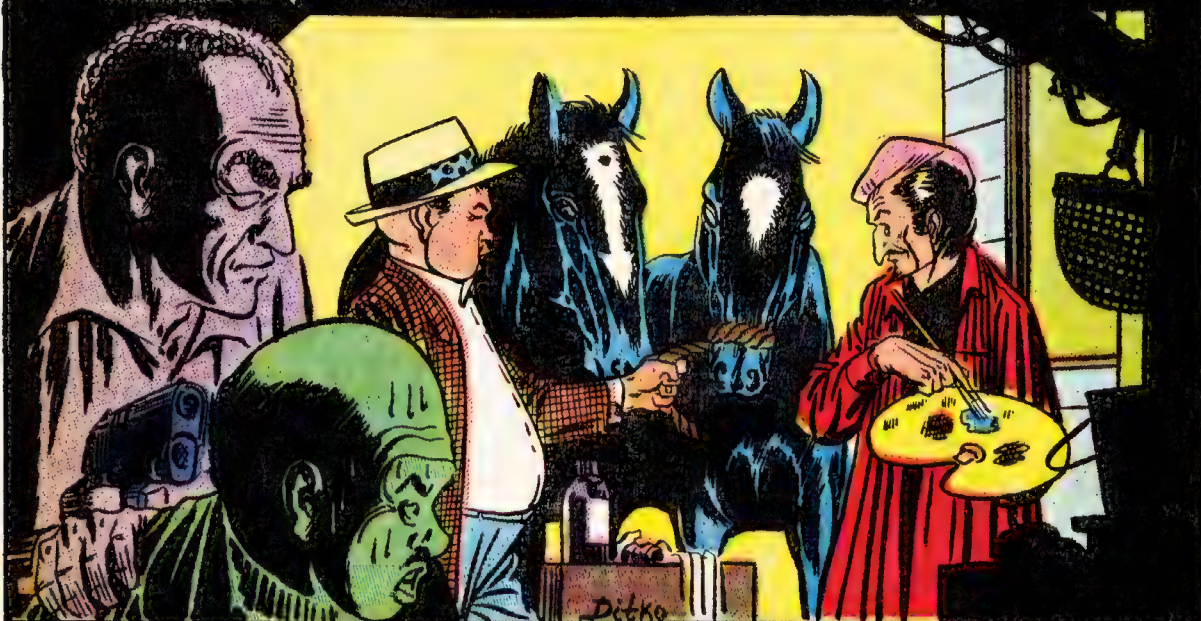


SID GLEASON WAS AS DEFT AT CHANGING THE APPEARANCE OF A RACEHORSE AS THE MOST SKILLED MAKE-UP EXPERT IS AT ALTERING AN ACTOR'S IDENTITY. HE WAS SO GOOD, IN FACT, THAT HIS ASTONISHING SUCCESS LED TO THE COLLAPSE OF AN INGENIOUS RACKET---THE SWINDLE WHICH GAVE HIM THE NICKNAME...

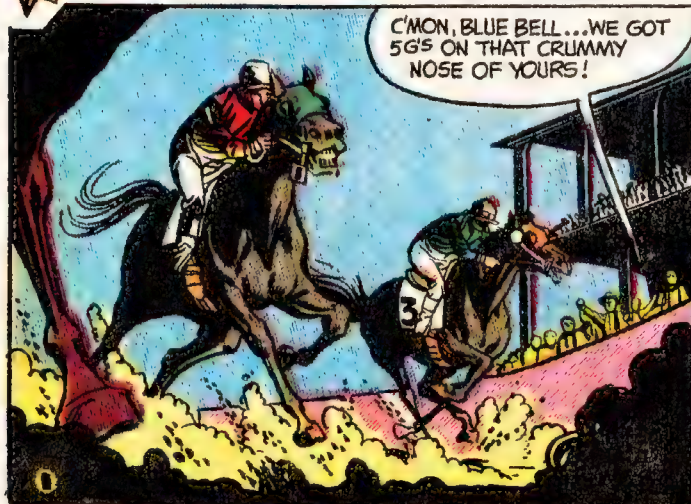
Botticelli OF THE BANGTAILS!

YOU'RE A REAL GENIUS, SID...A REGULAR REMBRANTOT AT PAINTING A HORSE TO MAKE HIM LOOK LIKE WHAT HE AIN'T!

A COUPLA MORE STROKES OF THE BRUSH AND WE'LL HAVE TWO NATIVE LANCERS! THEN WE'LL HAVE US A MILLION DOLLAR RUNNER FOR A DOLLAR'S WORTH OF PAINT!



IT WAS AT THE RACE-TRACK WITH STEVE PRYOR, MY ASSISTANT, INVESTIGATING A CHARGE OF "DOPING" WHEN THE WHOLE THING STARTED. IT WAS THE 6TH RACE--



C'MON, BLUE BELL...WE GOT 50'S ON THAT CRUMMY NOSE OF YOURS!

THAT LOUSY NAG YOU TOUTED ME ON...HE'S RUNNING **FOURTH**! I THOUGHT YOU TOLD ME THIS RACE WAS IN THE BAG...

I-I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT, MANNY! THE FEED-BOX RUMOR SAID IT WAS ALL SET FOR BLUEBELL TO WIN IN A ROMP!



YOU AND YOUR SURE-THINGS... THAT PLUG FINISHED OUTTA THE MONEY! \$5,000 DOWN THE DRAIN... **BAH!**

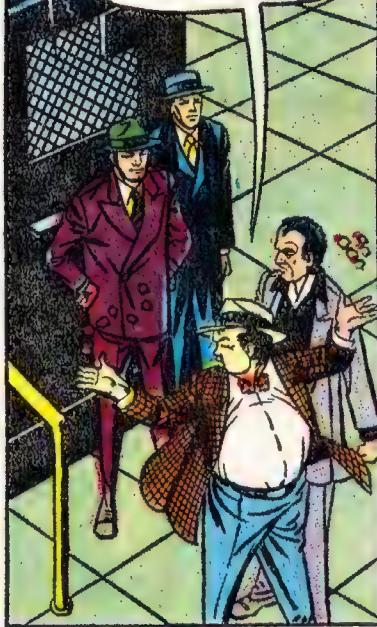
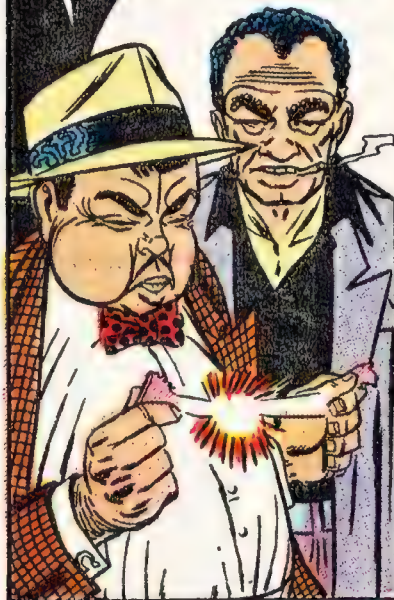
B-BUT THE BOYS TOLD ME BLUE BELL **COULDN'T** LOSE, BOSS! HE WAS GOING GREAT GUNS IN MORNING TRIALS AND...

LOSE A RACE, MANNY?

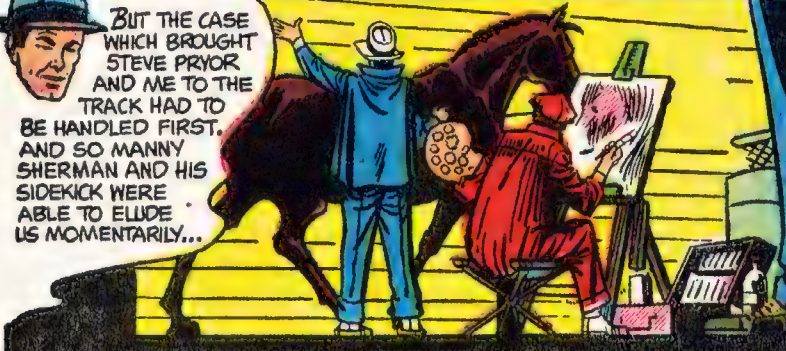
HUH...OH, INSPECTOR O'MALLEY! I...HEH HEH...I GUESS WE **ALL** HAFTA LOSE ONCE IN AWHILE, DON'T WE? BUT I BELIEVE IN TAKING IT WITH A GRIN... EASY COME, EASY GO, I ALWAYS SAY!

IT'S NOT LIKE MANNY SHERMAN TO BE SO GAY ABOUT DROPPING A BUNDLE ON THE BANGTAILS. I WONDER WHAT **HE'S** UP TO HERE AT THE TRACK?

PROBABLY TRYING TO MAKE A FAST-KILLING SINCE COMING OUT OF THE FEDERAL PEN LAST WEEK! WORTH KEEPING AN EYE ON HIM AND HIS MUSCLE-BOUND STOOGES!



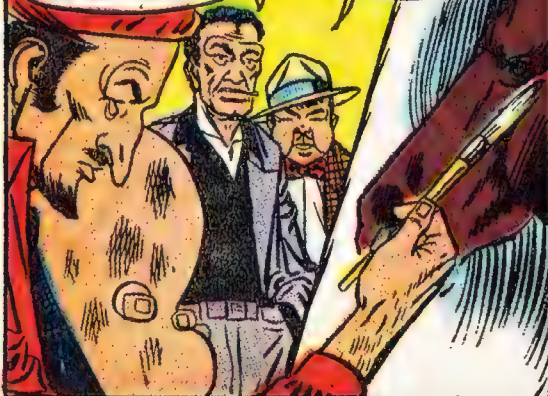
BUT THE CASE WHICH BROUGHT STEVE PRIOR AND ME TO THE TRACK HAD TO BE HANDLED FIRST. AND SO MANNY SHERMAN AND HIS SIDEKICK WERE ABLE TO ELUDE US MOMENTARILY...



LOOKA THAT GOON OVER THERE, BOSS! HE'S PAINTING A PITCHER OF ONE OF THE NAGS...

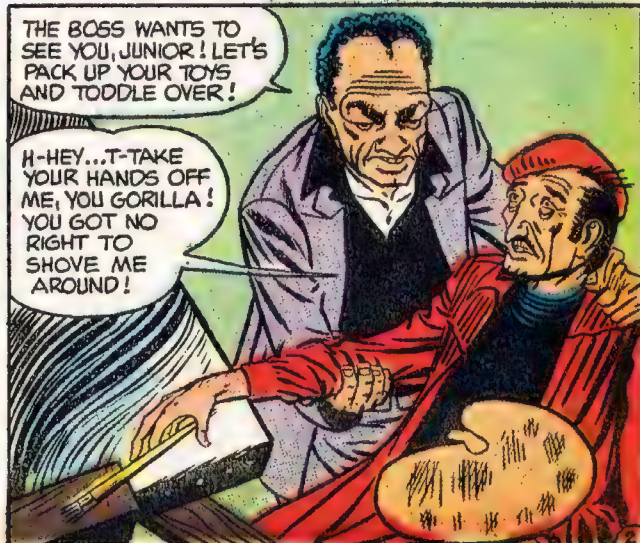
SURE LOOKS LIKE THAT OAT BURNER, DON'T IT? BE GREAT IF WE COULD HIRE A GUY LIKE THIS TO PAINT **SPEED** INTO THE HORSES WE BET ON...

HMMM...GIVES ME AN IDEA. ASK THE GENTLEMAN TO JOIN ME AT THE CAR, TRIG!



THE BOSS WANTS TO SEE YOU, JUNIOR! LET'S PACK UP YOUR TOYS AND TODDLE OVER!

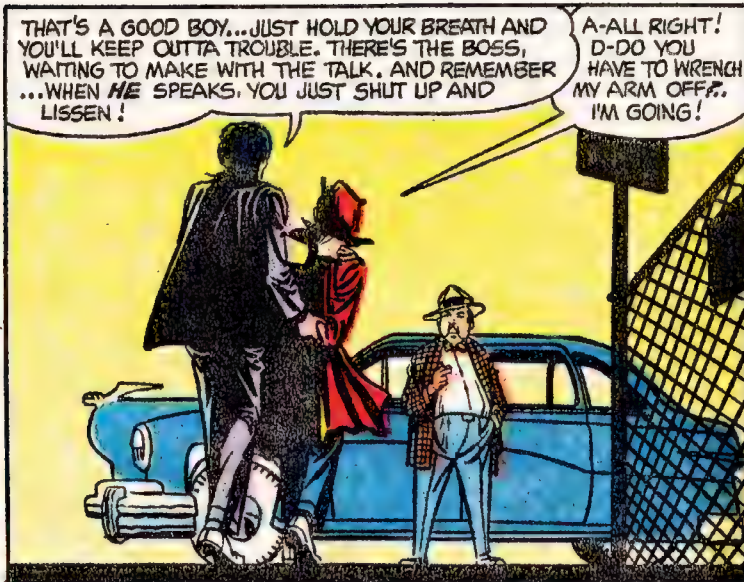
H-HEY...T-TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME, YOU GORILLA! YOU GOT NO RIGHT TO SHOVE ME AROUND!





RIGHT? WHO NEEDS A RIGHT ON A PUNK LIKE YOU? MY LEFT IS GOOD ENOUGH...

L-LEAVE ME ALONE BEFORE I CALL THE POLI....
UNGGG!



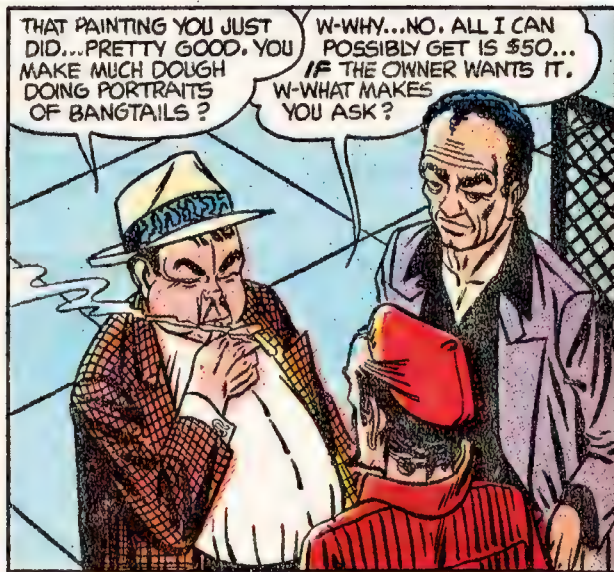
THAT'S A GOOD BOY...JUST HOLD YOUR BREATH AND YOU'LL KEEP OUTTA TROUBLE. THERE'S THE BOSS, WAITING TO MAKE WITH THE TALK. AND REMEMBER...WHEN HE SPEAKS, YOU JUST SHUT UP AND LISSEN!

A-ALL RIGHT! D-DO YOU HAVE TO WRENCH MY ARM OFF?, I'M GOING!



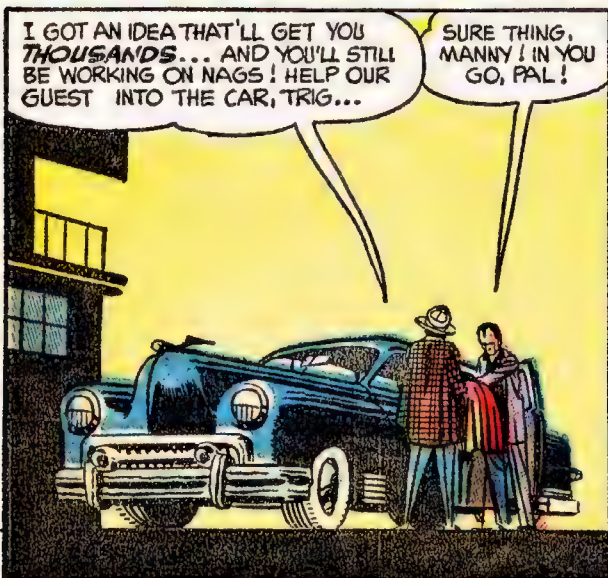
W-WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT? THIS MONSTER STARTS MOLESTING ME AND...

TRIG DIDN'T MEAN ANY HARM, FRIEND... IT'S JUST THAT BONES START POPPING WHEN HE GETS EXCITED! HERE...LET ME HELP YOU GET BACK INTO ONE PIECE!



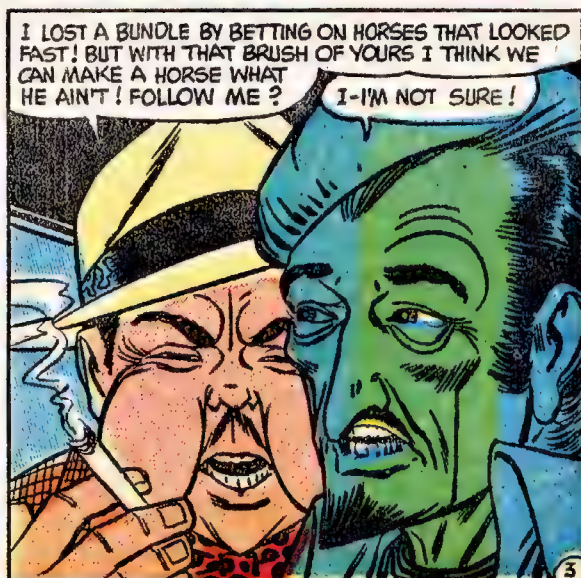
THAT PAINTING YOU JUST DID...PRETTY GOOD, YOU MAKE MUCH DOUGH DOING PORTRAITS OF BANGTAILS?

W-WHY...NO. ALL I CAN POSSIBLY GET IS \$50... IF THE OWNER WANTS IT. W-WHAT MAKES YOU ASK?



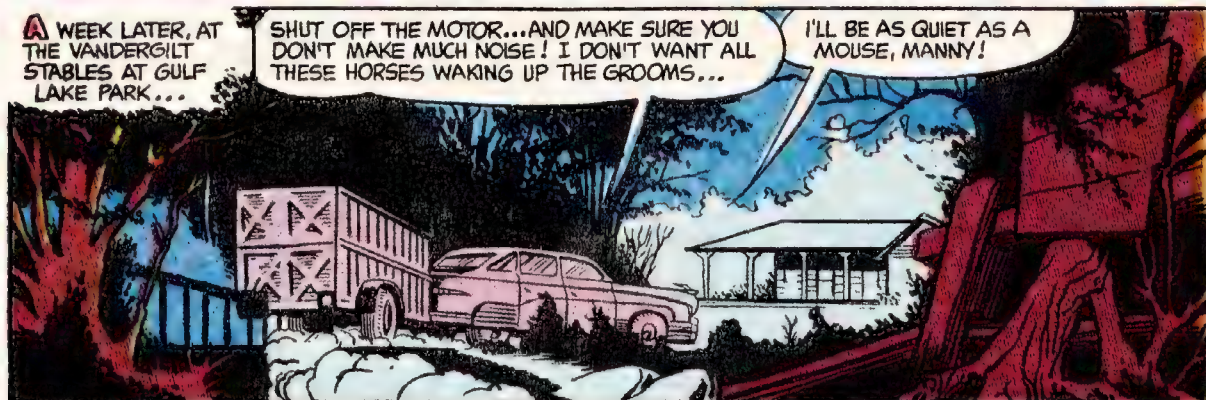
I GOT AN IDEA THAT'LL GET YOU THOUSANDS... AND YOU'LL STILL BE WORKING ON NAGS! HELP OUR GUEST INTO THE CAR, TRIG...

SURE THING, MANNY! IN YOU GO, PAL!



I LOST A BUNDLE BY BETTING ON HORSES THAT LOOKED FAST! BUT WITH THAT BRUSH OF YOURS I THINK WE CAN MAKE A HORSE WHAT HE AIN'T! FOLLOW ME?

I-I'M NOT SURE!



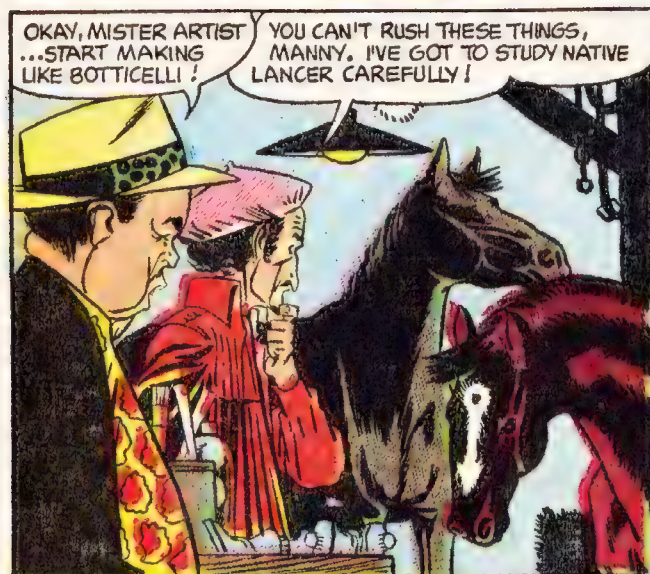


YOU MUST BE
CRAZY, MISTER!
I HAVEN'T GOT
MORE THAN...
ARGHHH!



HE'S OUT COLD, MANNY!
WON'T BE UP AND AROUND
FOR A HALF-HOUR!

IF HE **DOES** COME TO, YOU MAKE SURE
HE GOES RIGHT BACK TO SLEEP 'TIL
SID'S FINISHED WORKING! C'MON...GET
OUR NAG IN HERE FAST!



OKAY, MISTER ARTIST
...START MAKING
LIKE BOTTICELLI!

YOU CAN'T RUSH THESE THINGS,
MANNY. I'VE GOT TO STUDY NATIVE
LANCER CAREFULLY!



WHERE OUR HORSE
DIFFERS FROM NATIVE
LANCER IN COLOR I
HAVE TO MAKE THE
PAINT DO THE
WORK!

NEVER MIND THE BLOW-
BY-BLOW DESCRIPTION,
SID! JUST KEEP SLAP-
PING IT ON...WE AIN'T
GOT ALL NIGHT!

AN HOUR AND A HALF PASSED, AND AT THE END OF
THAT TIME A REMARKABLE CHANGE HAD OCCURRED
IN THE STABLE OF NATIVE LANCER...

YOU'RE A GENIUS,
SID! HIS OWN
MOTHER COULDN'T
TELL THIS PLUG
WE BROUGHT
FROM THE REAL
THING!

THE MORE I THINK OF YOUR
IDEA, MANNY...THE BETTER
I LIKE IT! I'M PROBABLY
THE FIRST SPECIALIST IN THIS
NEW ART...PAINTING HORSES
TO LOOK LIKE WHAT THEY AIN'T!



I WENT THROUGH
THAT PUNK'S POCKETS
LIKE YOU SAID, MANNY.
IT'LL LOOK LIKE A
CASE OF **ROBBERY!**

FOR A COUPLA DAYS NOBODY'LL
KNOW THAT THE HORSE IN THE
STALL IS A FAKE...OR THAT
WE HAVE THE REAL NATIVE
LANCER! C'MON...LET'S
CLEAR OUT!





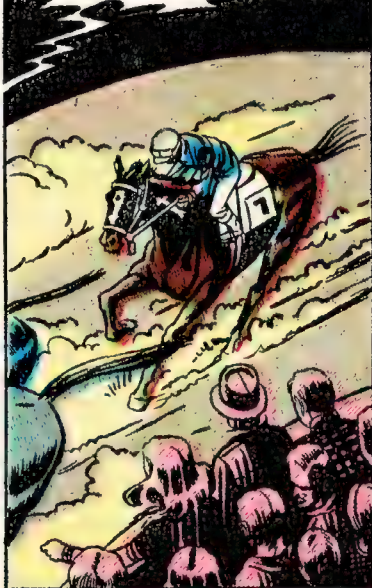
THREE DAYS LATER STEVE AND I WERE AT THE TRACK AGAIN, WRAPPING UP THE EVIDENCE IN THE DOPING CASE..

HAVEN'T LEARNED YOUR LESSON YET, MANNY? I SEE YOU'RE BETTING YOUR BANKROLL AGAIN!

I CAN'T RESIST THE TEMPTATION, INSPECTOR! BESIDES NATIVE LANCER'S RUNNING IN THE DERBY TODAY... AND HE'S BOUND TO LOSE ONE OF THESE DAYS! I'M BETTING THE FIELD AGAINST HIM!

THE FAMOUS DERBY STARTED AND WE LOST SIGHT OF MANNY SHERMAN IN THE EXCITED CROWDS, BUT I REMEMBERED HIM BECAUSE A STRANGE THING HAPPENED...

DOWN THE HOME STRETCH THEY'RE COMING...AND NATIVE LANCER'S A BADLY BEATEN HORSE. IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A ROMP FOR HIM BUT HE'S NOT ACTING LIKE HIMSELF AT ALL!



KEEP THAT MOTOR HUMMING, SID... HERE COME A COUPLE RICH MEN!

A HUNDRED GRAND,..NOT A BAD AFTERNOON'S WORK! AND ALL BECAUSE NATIVE LANCER SEEMED TO HAVE LOST HIS SPEED! HEH, HEH! LET'S CLEAR OUTTA HERE BEFORE SOMEONE GETS SUSPICIOUS AND LOOKS THAT NAG OVER CLOSELY!



MANNY SHERMAN DISAPPEARED FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS, BUT HE WASN'T IDLE...

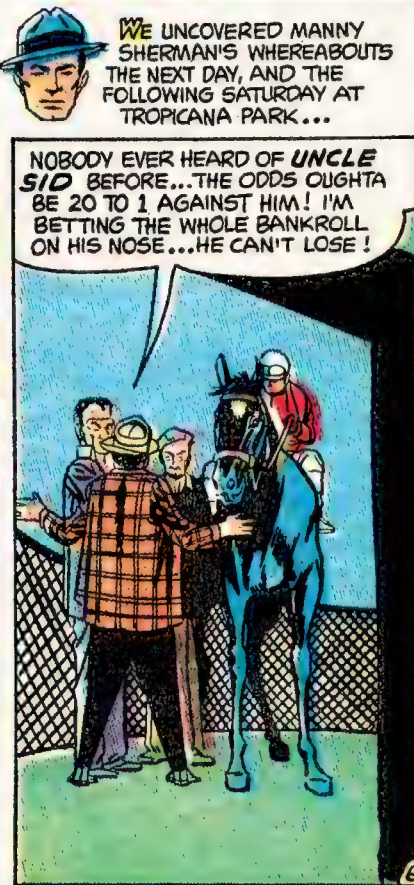
HOW DO YOU WANT ME TO PAINT 'IM, MANNY?

JUST SO HE LOOKS LIKE ANY HORSE BUT NATIVE LANCER, SID! PAINT OVER THE MARK ON HIS FOREHEAD- THEN WE'LL ENTER HIM IN A RACE AS AN ORDINARY NAG, INSTEAD OF AS THE GREATEST THREE YEAR OLD OF THEM ALL!



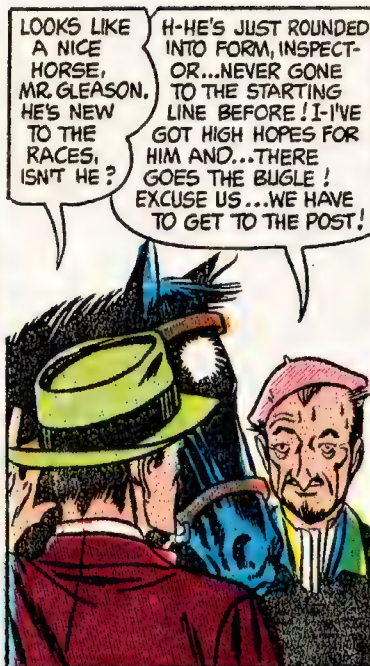
THAT WRAPS UP THE JOB, MANNY...NOT EVEN HIS OWN TRAINER WOULD RECOGNIZE THIS HORSE AS BEING NATIVE LANCER!

WE'LL NAME HIM **UNCLE SID**, AFTER HIS CREATOR! AND YOU'LL ENTER HIM AT TROPICANA PARK, SID...YOU'RE HIS NEW OWNER!

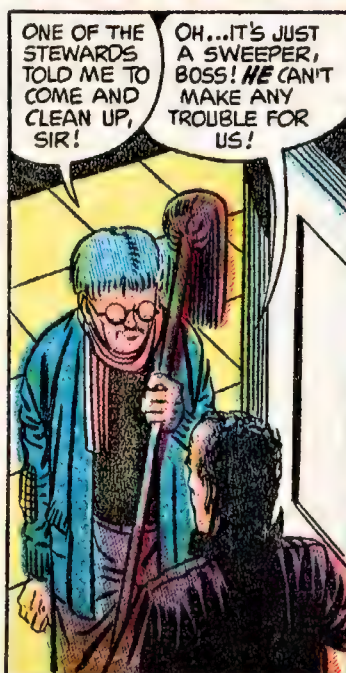
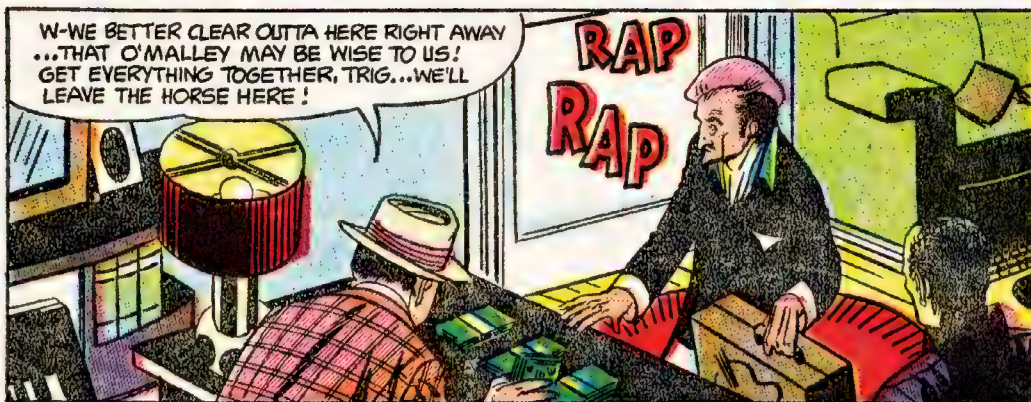


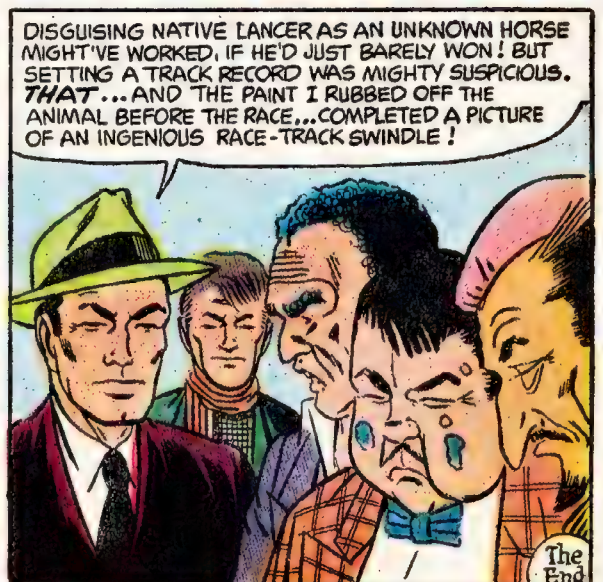
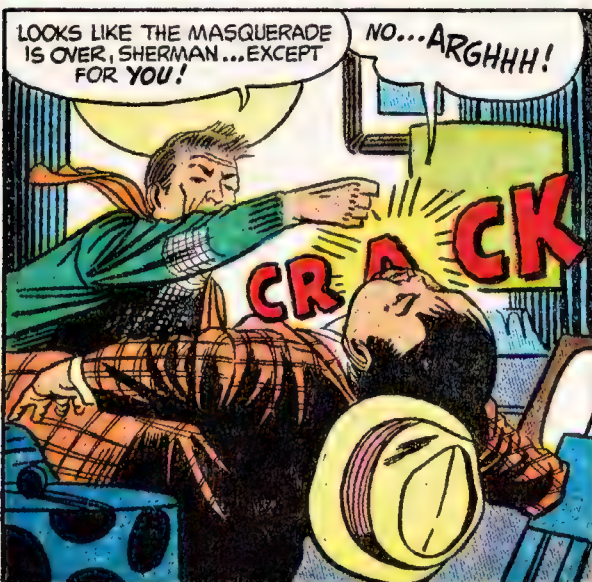
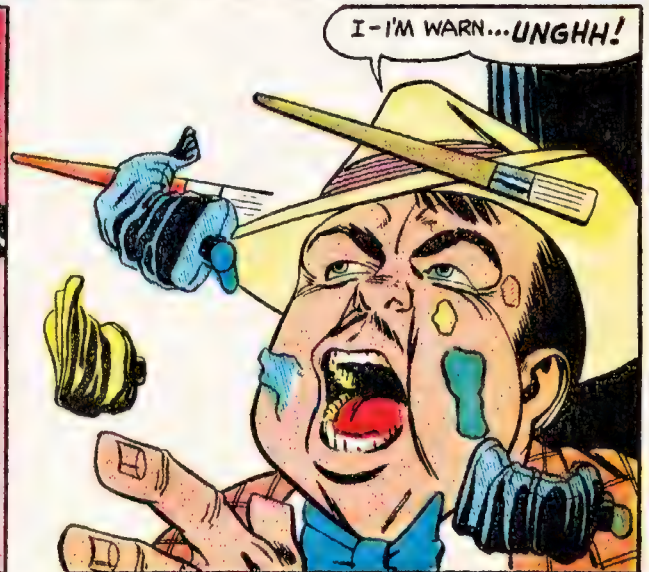
WE UNCOVERED MANNY SHERMAN'S WHEREABOUTS THE NEXT DAY, AND THE FOLLOWING SATURDAY AT TROPICANA PARK...

NOBODY EVER HEARD OF **UNCLE SID** BEFORE...THE ODDS OUGHTA BE 20 TO 1 AGAINST HIM! I'M BETTING THE WHOLE BANKROLL ON HIS NOSE...HE CAN'T LOSE!



MANNY SHERMAN WAS FOLLOWED TO THE BETTING WINDOW, WHERE HE PICKED UP A FORTUNE IN LARGE BILLS. THEN...







THE THING

WEIRD TALES OF SUSPENSE AND HORROR

No 14

THE

THING!

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION



HERE WE ARE AGAIN, DEAR READERS, WELCOME TO MY LIBRARY OF FAIRY TALES. WELCOME TO MY GHOULISH "EEKS-OF-THE-MONTH"! THIS TIME WE HAVE A VERY SWEET LITTLE TALE FOR YOU---JUST CHUCK-FULL OF THE JUICE OF CRUSHED VICTIMS, AND BUBBLING WITH THE TERROR OF AGONIZED SCREAMS. HERE THEN, IS MY FENDISH OFFERING---

RUMPELSTILTSKIN

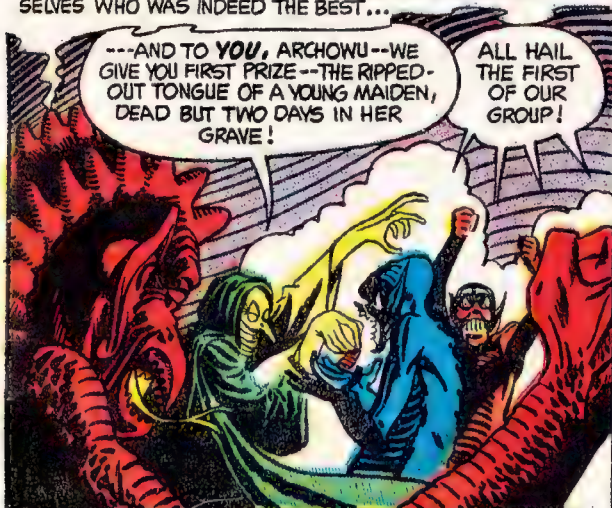
AS TOLD BY- *The Thing*



LAUGH, SHOUT---BE MERRY, BROTHERS!
FOR SOON WE SHALL CHOOSE THOSE AMONG
US WHO ARE THE BEST DEMONS, GHOULS,
VAMPIRES AND GARGOYLES OF
OUR GROUP!

BAH! THEY SHALL
SEE THAT I AM
THE ONE!

ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE WAS A GIANT HILL NEAR THE OUTSKIRTS OF A LARGE VILLAGE. DEMONS FROM ALL OVER THE EARTH GATHERED AROUND TO JUDGE AMONG THEMSELVES WHO WAS INDEED THE BEST...



---AND TO **YOU**, ARCHOWU--WE
GIVE YOU FIRST PRIZE--THE RIPPED-
OUT TONGUE OF A YOUNG MAIDEN,
DEAD BUT TWO DAYS IN HER
GRAVE!

ALL HAIL
THE FIRST
OF OUR
GROUP!

AND TO YOU, **LAHOKDI**-- WE GIVE
YOU SECOND PRIZE--THE TWO HANDS
OF THE TERRIBLE NORTH WITCH WHO
FORGOT TO PUT BRAKES ON HER BROOM
AND FELL INTO THE SEA!

ALL HAIL
THE SECOND
OF OUR
GROUP!





AND THIRD AND LAST---IS OUR OWN RUMPELSTILTSKIN---WHO GETS THIS WONDERFUL CRYSTAL BALL FOR HIS GOOD EFFORTS!

THIRD PLACE !! THIS IS AN INSULT !



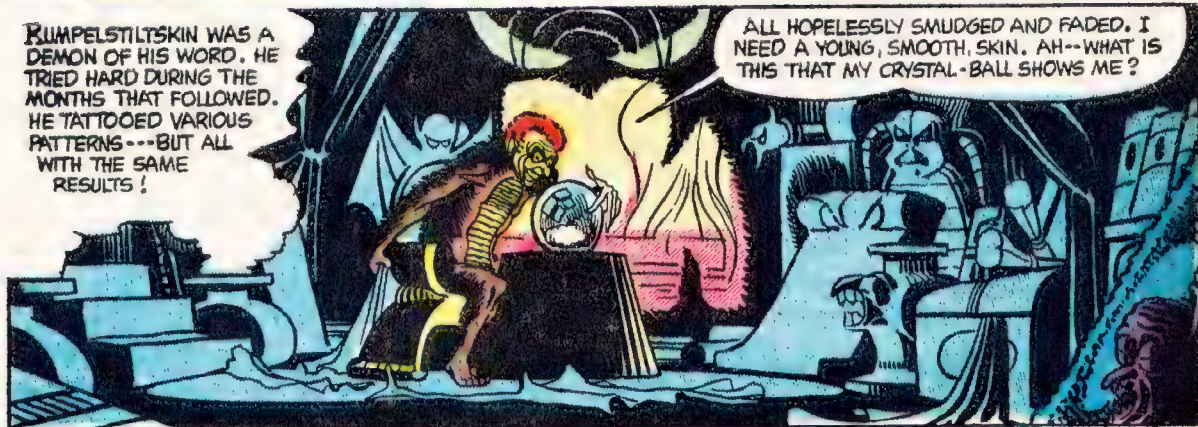
THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRIZE, LOYAL BROTHERS. BUT I THOUGHT TO RECEIVE **FIRST PRIZE** AMONG YOU. NEXT YEAR I SHALL KEEP THIS VOW !

HO ! ALREADY RUMPELSTILTSKIN BOASTS OF HIS DEMONRY ! WHAT DOES HE SHOW US AS PROOF OF HIS SKILL ?



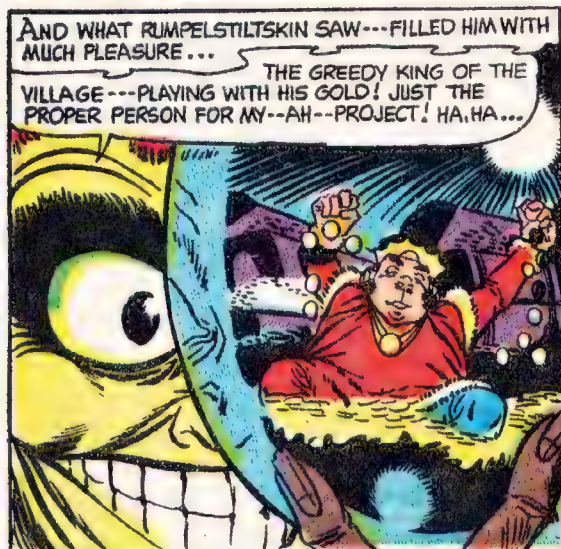
HERE ARE THE VARIOUS SKINS I HAVE BROUGHT WITH ME. THESE ARTISTIC EFFORTS WILL CAUSE ALL OF YOU TO WONDER ! FOR NEXT YEAR---I SHALL TATOO ON THE SKIN OF A HUMAN OUR PATTERNS OF THE DAMNED !

TRULY--IF YOU CAN ACCOMPLISH THIS, RUMPELSTILTSKIN---YOU SHALL BE OUR DEMON LEADER !



RUMPELSTILTSKIN WAS A DEMON OF HIS WORD. HE TRIED HARD DURING THE MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED. HE TATOOED VARIOUS PATTERNS---BUT ALL WITH THE SAME RESULTS !

ALL HOPELESSLY SMUDGED AND FADED. I NEED A YOUNG, SMOOTH SKIN. AH--WHAT IS THIS THAT MY CRYSTAL-BALL SHOWS ME ?



AND WHAT RUMPELSTILTSKIN SAW---FILLED HIM WITH MUCH PLEASURE ...

THE GREEDY KING OF THE VILLAGE---PLAYING WITH HIS GOLD ! JUST THE PROPER PERSON FOR MY--AH--PROJECT ! HA, HA...



SO RUMPELSTILTSKIN, IN THE GUISE OF AN ANCIENT WISE-MAN, APPEARED BEFORE THE KING, AND...

THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO INCREASE YOUR GOLD, HIGHNESS--AND THAT IS TO WAGE A CONTEST !

A CONTEST--?

OF COURSE--NOW LISTEN! PROCLAIM A NATIONAL CONTEST FOR THE ONE WHO CAN CREATE GOLD FOR YOU. MAGICIANS, NECROMANCERS, CHARLATANS, AND ALL SORTS OF ROGUES WILL HASTEN TO YOUR PALACE AND TRY TO GIVE YOU THIS GOLD IN RETURN FOR YOUR ROYAL FAVOR. THEY SHALL ALL FAIL--AND YOU WILL KEEP ALL THE GOLD THEY BRING WITH THEM TO FOOL YOU!

HMMM...

AGREED! HO--SCRIBE! COME HITHER--AND TAKE DOWN MY COMMANDS! BE IT KNOWN THAT I, KING MIDROS, PROCLAIM A NATIONAL EVENT....!

HEE, HEE...THE FAT ONE ALREADY HAS BEEN TRICKED INTO MY SCHEME!

AND SOON...THE KING'S MESSAGE WENT OUT TO ALL CORNERS OF HIS KINGDOM...

OYEZ-OYEZ--WHO'SOEVER SHALL FILL THE KING'S COFFERS WITH GOLD SHALL BECOME HIS FAVORITE--AND ASK OF HIM ANY WISH WITHIN THE KING'S GRACE!

NOW---THIS PROCLAMATION REACHED THE EARS OF A POOR MILLER AND HIS DAUGHTER...

WHAT CAN I, A POOR MILLER, DO TO FILL HIS MAJESTY'S COFFERS? 'TIS FOLLY, MY PRETTY DAUGHTER! WE ARE DOOMED TO STARVE!

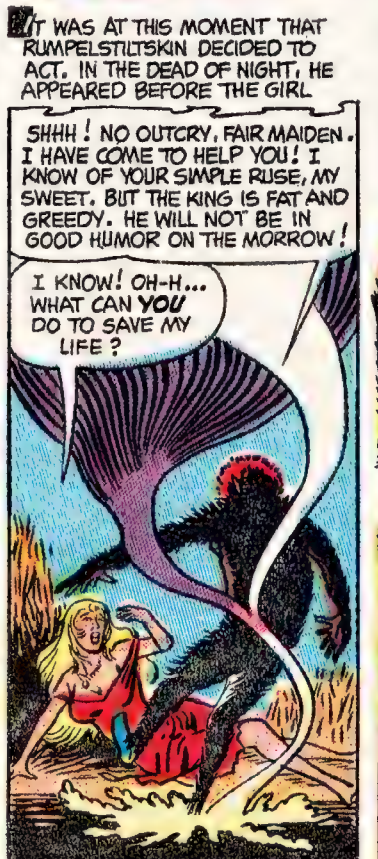
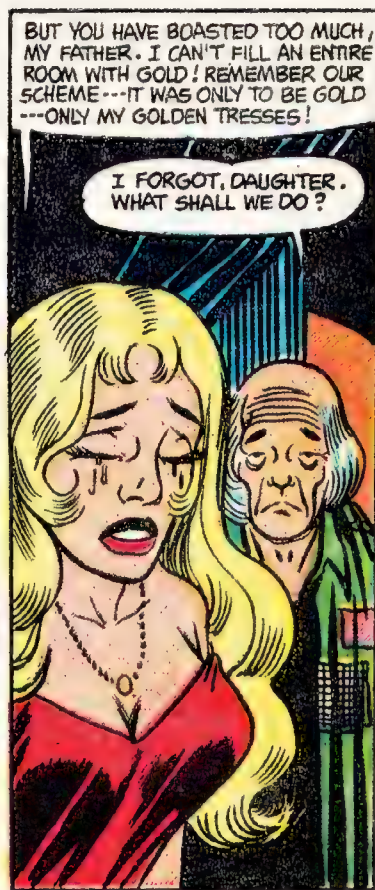
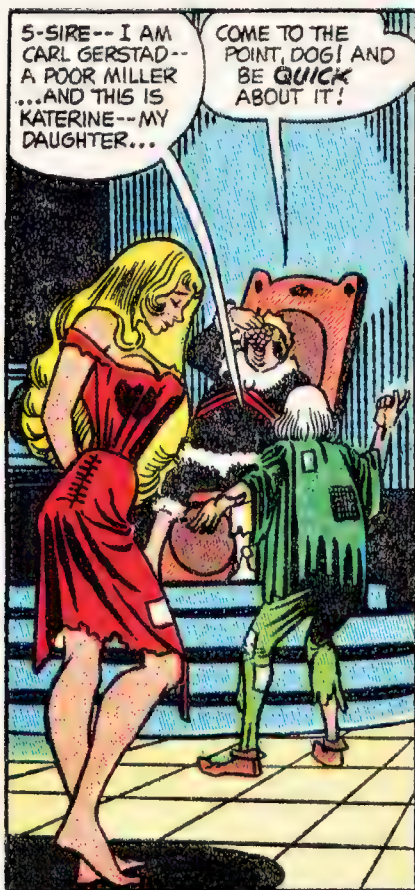
FEAR NOT, MY FATHER! I SHALL GIVE HIM THE GOLD OF MY HAIR IN A SIMPLE RUSE! THE KING WILL BE TRICKED--BUT HE SHALL TAKE ME AS HIS WIFE! THEN WE SHALL BOTH BE HAPPY!

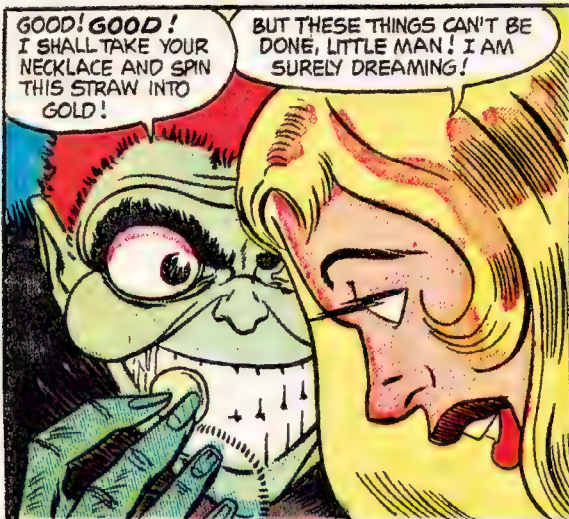
MEANWHILE, THE CONTEST HAD ALREADY BEGUN. MANY FLOCKED TO THE KING'S PALACE. MANY TRIED TO FOOL THE KING. MANY PAID WITH THEIR LIVES...

MERCY, SIRE! I ONLY TRIED TO DECEIVE YOU WITH A FEW TRICKS!

FLOG HIM--AND BRING HIS HEAD TO ME!

AND OF COURSE, I SHALL KEEP YOUR OFFER OF GOLD. YOU THOUGHT TO KEEP THIS HIDDEN WITHIN THE FOLDS OF YOUR CLOAK. THUS, BY FALSE MAGIC, YOU PLANNED TO STREW THE GOLD ABOUT MY FEET AS IF THEY WERE BORN THROUGH A SPELL! BUT I HAVE SEEN THROUGH YOUR DECEPTION! NEXT!



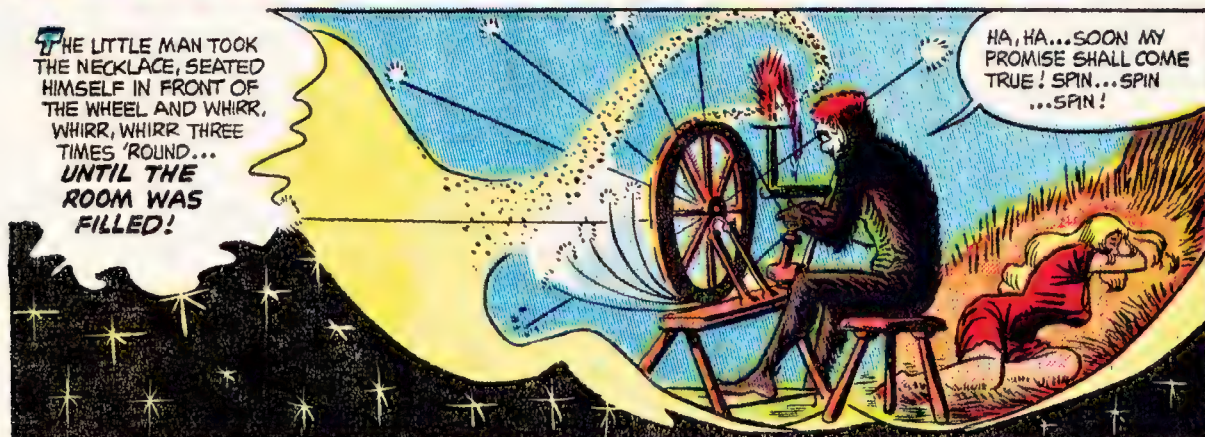


GOOD! GOOD!
I SHALL TAKE YOUR
NECKLACE AND SPIN
THIS STRAW INTO
GOLD!

BUT THESE THINGS CAN'T BE
DONE, LITTLE MAN! I AM
SURELY DREAMING!



THEN CLOSE YOUR EYES, MY PET
---AND **DREAM**. FOR TOMORROW
THIS ROOM SHALL BE FILLED TO
THE RAFTERS WITH THE
KING'S GOLD!

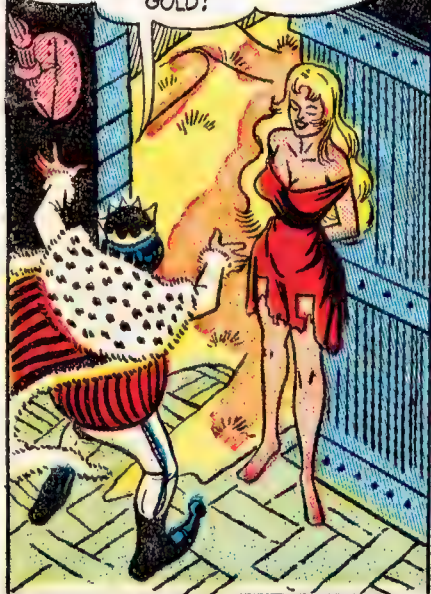


THE LITTLE MAN TOOK
THE NECKLACE, SEATED
HIMSELF IN FRONT OF
THE WHEEL AND WHIRR,
WHIRR, WHIRR THREE
TIMES 'ROUND...
**UNTIL THE
ROOM WAS
FILLED!**

HA, HA... SOON MY
PROMISE SHALL COME
TRUE! SPIN... SPIN
...SPIN!

AND WHEN THE GREEDY KING OPENED
THE LOCKED ROOM, HE SAW...

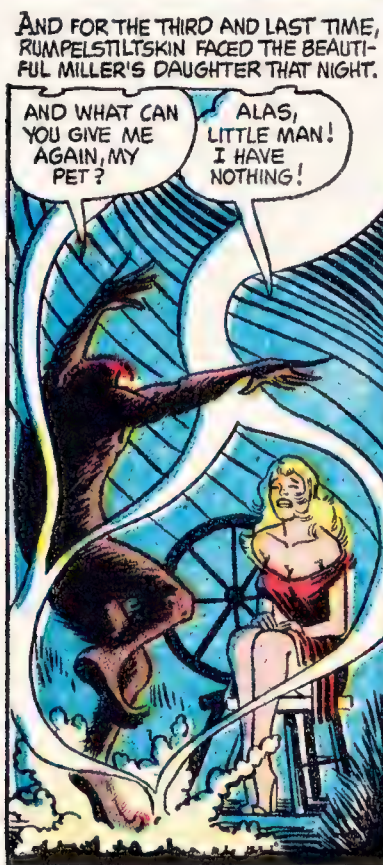
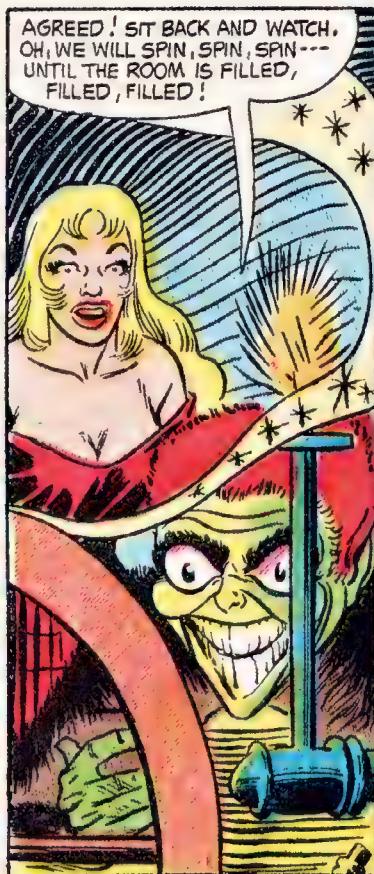
GOLD! GOLD!! 'TIS TRUE AFTER
ALL! THE GOOD MILLER HAS NOT
DECEIVED ME! THIS PRETTY GIRL
HAS SPUN ALL THE STRAW INTO
GOLD!



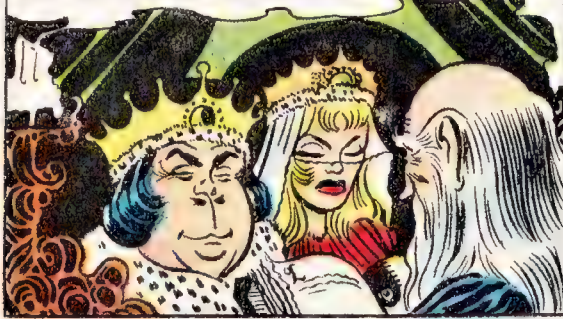
EXCELLENT! AND YOU SHALL BE
REWARDED! BUT FIRST---YOU
WILL SPIN ME **ANOTHER** ROOM
FULL OF GOLD THIS VERY NIGHT.
OR---**OFF**--- WITH YOUR HEAD!
TWO ROOMS ARE BETTER THAN
ONE! HEE, HEE...

OH, NO! NO!
I'M LOST!





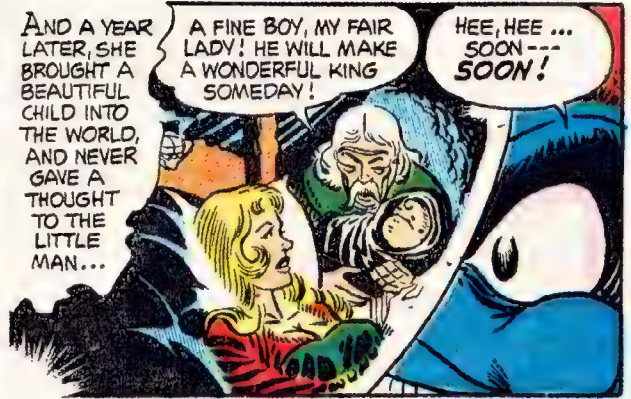
AND THE FAT KING MIDROS DID **EXACTLY** THAT! IN NO TIME AT ALL, KATERINE, THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER, BECAME QUEEN OF ALL THE LAND!



AND A YEAR LATER, SHE BROUGHT A BEAUTIFUL CHILD INTO THE WORLD, AND NEVER GAVE A THOUGHT TO THE LITTLE MAN...

A FINE BOY, MY FAIR LADY! HE WILL MAKE A WONDERFUL KING SOMEDAY!

HEE, HEE ... SOON --- SOON!



AND THAT VERY NEXT TIME, AT THE UNEARTHLY GATHERING, RUMPELSTILTSKIN MADE HIS CLAIM!

YOUR ATTENTION, BROTHERS! I SHALL MAKE GOOD MY VOW! I SHALL BRING YOU A WORK OF ART THE **LIKES** OF WHICH YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN!



I SHALL BRING YOU A YOUNG, TENDER SKIN! ON IT SHALL BE TATTOOED ALL THE MARKS OF THE DAMNED. ON IT SHALL BE THE ARTISTRY OF RUMPELSTILTSKIN!

WE SHALL SOON SEE, OH BRAGGART! WE SHALL SOON KNOW OF YOUR SKILL!



BUT RUMPELSTILTSKIN HAD PREPARED CAREFULLY AND WELL. FOR A FEW DAYS LATER, IN THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER...

NOW GIVE ME WHAT YOU PROMISED, OH BEAUTIFUL QUEEN! BUT I AM TOO HASTY, METHINKS! I SHALL GIVE YOU THREE DAYS TO GUESS MY NAME, AND IF BY THAT TIME YOU FIND OUT MY NAME, THEN SHALL YOU KEEP YOUR CHILD!

THREE DAYS! JUST THREE DAYS...



THE QUEEN LAY ILL--FOR WHO COULD FIND OUT THE NAME OF A DEMON SUCH AS RUMPELSTILTSKIN? BUT ONE OF HER COURTIER'S, A STALWART LAD, SPOKE UP BRAVELY...

FEAR NOT, MY FAIR LADY. I SHALL TRY TO BRING YOU THIS DEMON'S NAME!



MEANWHILE, RUMPELSTILTSKIN WAS PREPARING HIS EVIL-SMELLING BREW...

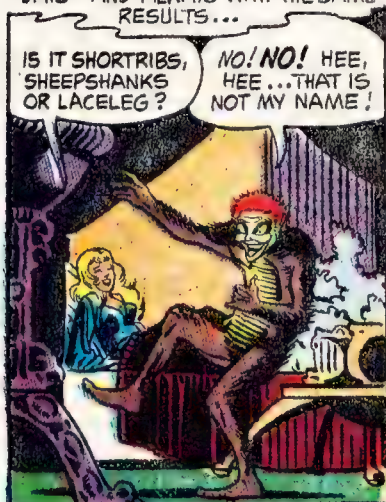
HO! HO! HEE, HEE.... SOON I SHALL MELT DOWN A LITTLE CHILD--AND STRETCH HIS SKIN FOR MY WORK! FOR NONE CAN FIND OUT THE NAME OF RUMPELSTILTSKIN!



SO RUMPELSTILTSKIN CALLED ON THE QUEEN FOR THE FIRST TWO DAYS--AND ALWAYS WITH THE SAME RESULTS...

IS IT SHORTTRIBS, SHEEPSHANKS OR LACELEG?

NO! NO! HEE, HEE... THAT IS NOT MY NAME!



AND THEN---ON THE THIRD DAY, THE QUEEN'S HANDSOME COURTIER REACHED THE QUEEN'S SIDE AFTER A FAR-FLUNG TRAVEL, AND--WHEN RUMPELSTILTSKIN MADE HIS APPEARANCE...

--CONRAD? HARRY? ROUNDOME?

NO! NO! HA, HA... NO!



THEN PERHAPS YOUR NAME IS RUMPELSTILTSKIN!

THE DEVIL HAS TOLD YOU THAT! THE DEVIL! THE DEVIL!



AND RUMPELSTILTSKIN FLED TO HIS HUT TO GRUMBLE AND MUMBLE AND STUMBLE ABOUT IN DESPAIR. BUT SOON HE HAD A VISITOR...

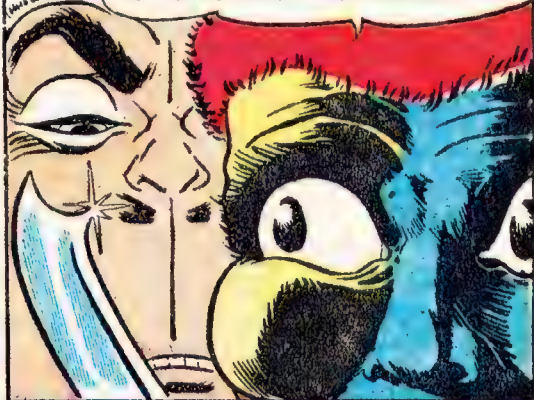
COME NOW, LITTLE MAN. I KNOW YOU WERE AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS LONG AGO! BUT NOW I HAVE A PROPOSITION FOR YOU! IF YOU WILL GIVE ME MUCH GOLD, I SHALL SHOW YOU A WAY TO GET RID OF THE QUEEN AND HER CHILD---FOR I HAVE TIRED OF THEM AND WISH ANOTHER!

GRUMBLE...MUMBLE... GET AWAY FROM ME, GREEDY ONE!



DON'T BE A SOREHEAD, RUMPELSTILTSKIN! REMEMBER---ONLY I AM YOUR MEANS FOR GETTING A SMOOTH, SMOOTH SKIN! SO LISTEN TO ME ---OR YOU SHALL NOT HAVE YOUR WISH!

A SMOOTH, SMOOTH SKIN. YES--THAT IS WHAT I WANT! YES INDEED..!



AND SO IT WAS THAT RUMPELSTILTSKIN FACED HIS BROTHER-DEMONS ON THE MOUNTAIN NEAR THE VILLAGE...

COME! COME! SHOW US YOUR BEAUTIFUL ART, RUMPELSTILTSKIN! WE ARE VERY ANXIOUS TO SEE!

AND YOU **SHALL** SEE, MY FRIENDS! FOR I HAVE WITH ME---THE **SMOOTHEST** SKIN OF ALL!



I HAVE THE SKIN OF ---THE KING!



AND THE MORAL, DEAR READERS? SIMPLY THIS! DON'T BE GREEDY AND EVIL--FOR RUMPELSTILTSKIN MAY REMEMBER YOU AS HE DID THE FAT KING MIDROS. THAT GREED BEGAN HIS SCHEME JUST AS GREED ENDED IT!

The Thing

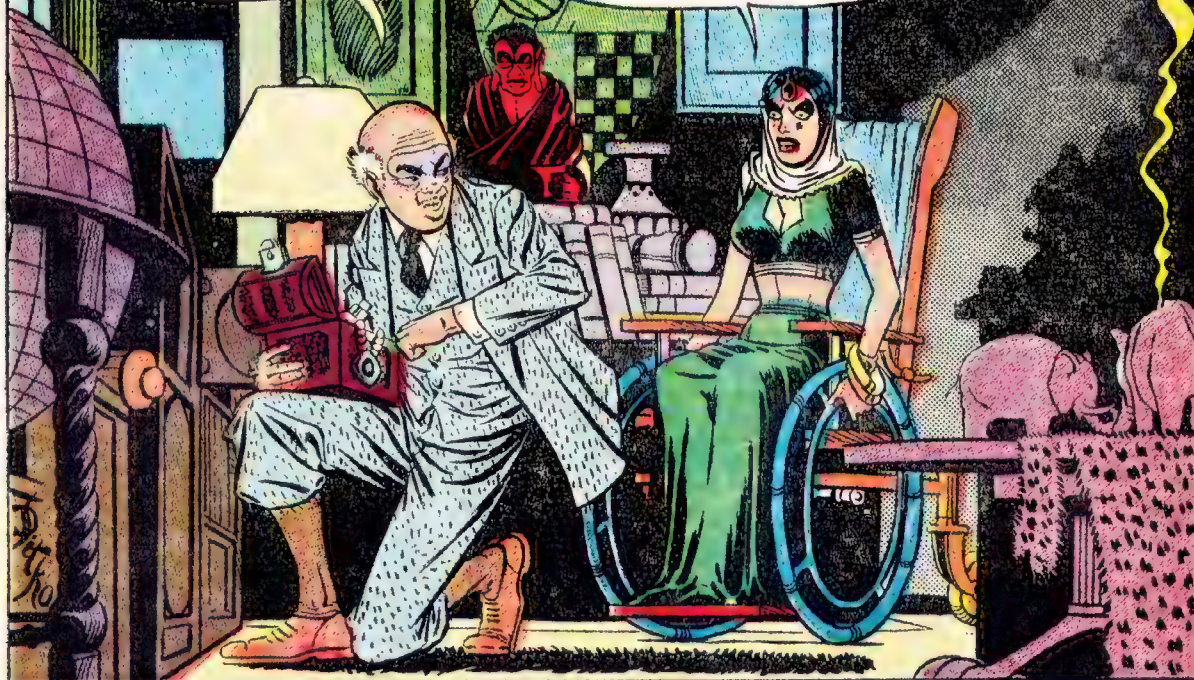
The End

The Thing presents-- **THE EVIL EYE!**

FOR YEARS HATRED SEETHED OPENLY IN THE BIZARRE CAIRO HOUSEHOLD. HUSBAND WARREN WAS FEARED IN THE AREA BECAUSE HIS RAGING TEMPER WAS ACCOMPANIED BY A FEROCIOUS LOVE OF GAMBLING AND LIQUOR...HIS CRIPPLED WIFE, GERDA, WAS THE SUBJECT OF UGLY, YET VAGUE RUMORS AMONG OTHER WOMEN OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD. NOW, AT LAST, THEIR SAVAGE FEUD SEEMED HEADED TOWARD A GRIM CONCLUSION---FOR WARREN HAD PURCHASED **ONE** TICKET FOR AN OCEAN CRUISE, AND GERDA WAS WORKING OVERTIME WITH HER SECRET POTIONS AND HEXES! READ ON... *The Thing!*

G-GERDA! I-I LOCKED YOU IN YOUR ROOM...HOW'D YOU GET OUT? AND HOW'D YOU KNOW WHERE **I** WAS?

STEALING MORE OF MY JEWELS, ARE YOU? I'VE WARNED YOU BEFORE, WARREN...NOW YOU'LL PAY THE PENALTY FOR GAMBLING AWAY MY FORTUNE!

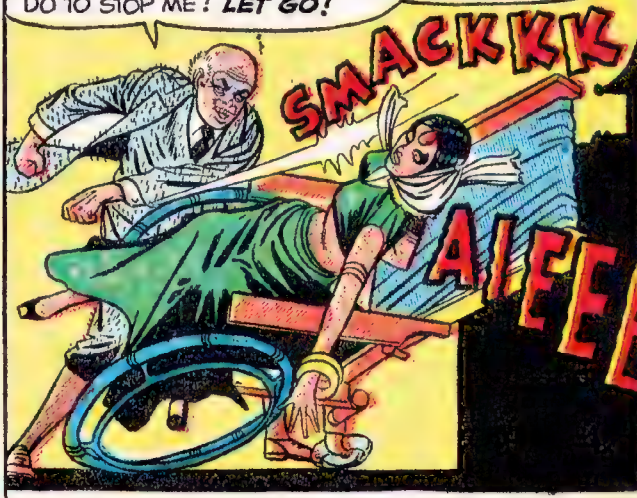


GIVE ME BACK MY PRECIOUS CATS-EYE RING, YOU PIG! YOU'VE STOLEN FOR THE LAST TIME...

DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH, YOU HIDEOUS WITCH... THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO TO STOP ME! TAKE YOUR CLAWS OFF ME!



I TOLD YOU TO **LET GO!** I'M SICK AND TIRED OF YOU AND YOUR CRAZY MANIAS! FROM NOW ON I'LL DO JUST AS I PLEASE...AND THERE ISN'T A THING YOU CAN DO TO STOP ME! **LET GO!**



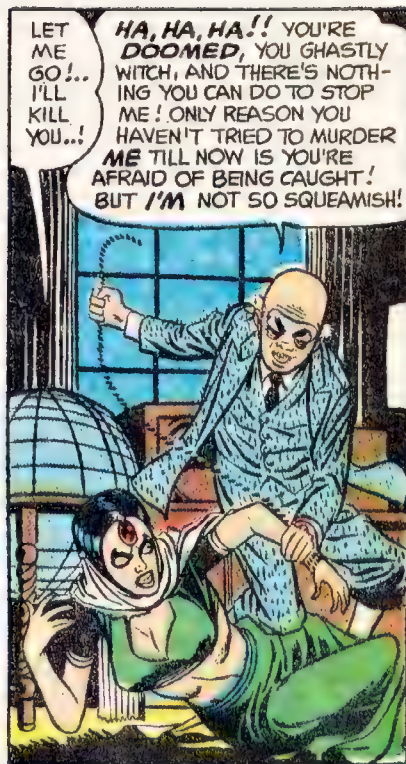


I-I'M CALLING MY LAWYER TO ARRANGE A DIVORCE, WARREN CAIRO! I'LL SEE THAT YOU'RE RUINED IN BUSINESS...CUT OFF WITHOUT A RED CENT!

DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH, HARPY! I'VE ALREADY MADE PLANS FOR YOUR IMMEDIATE FUTURE!

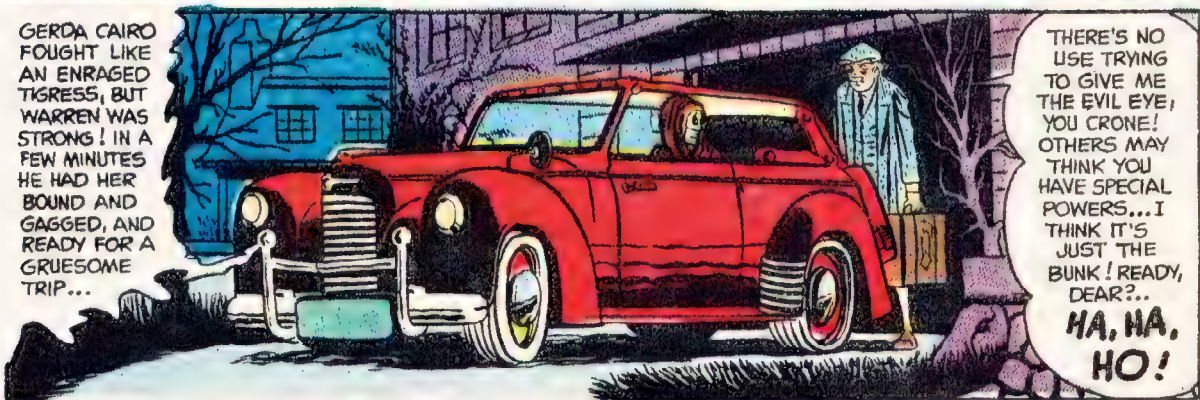


SEE THIS TICKET? IT'S FOR A SHIP LEAVING AT MIDNIGHT...A THREE MONTH MEDITERRANEAN CRUISE! I'LL BE ON THAT BOAT...AND YOU'RE DRIVING DOWN TOWARD THE PIER WITH ME! BUT YOU'LL NEVER COME BACK!



LET ME GO... I'LL KILL YOU...

HA, HA, HA!! YOU'RE DOOMED, YOU GHASTLY WITCH, AND THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO TO STOP ME! ONLY REASON YOU HAVEN'T TRIED TO MURDER ME TILL NOW IS YOU'RE AFRAID OF BEING CAUGHT! BUT I'M NOT SO SQUEAMISH!

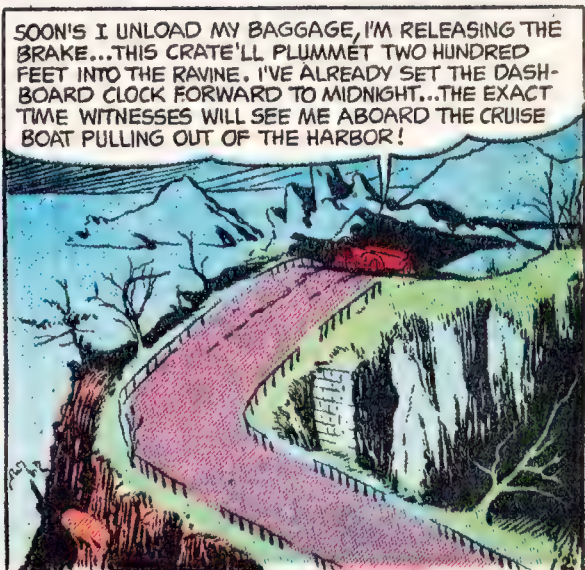


GERDA CAIRO FOUGHT LIKE AN ENRAGED TIGRESS, BUT WARREN WAS STRONG! IN A FEW MINUTES HE HAD HER BOUND AND GAGGED, AND READY FOR A GRUESOME TRIP...

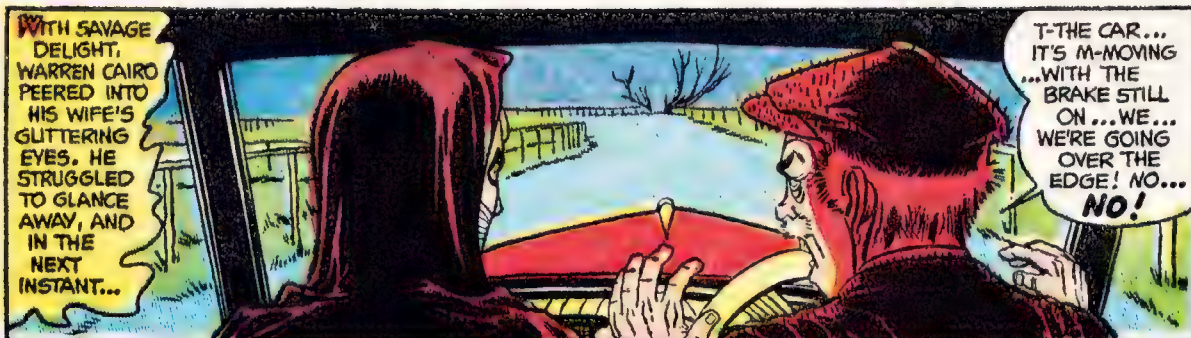
THERE'S NO USE TRYING TO GIVE ME THE EVIL EYE, YOU CRONE! OTHERS MAY THINK YOU HAVE SPECIAL POWERS...I THINK IT'S JUST THE BUNK! READY, DEAR?.. HA, HA, HO!



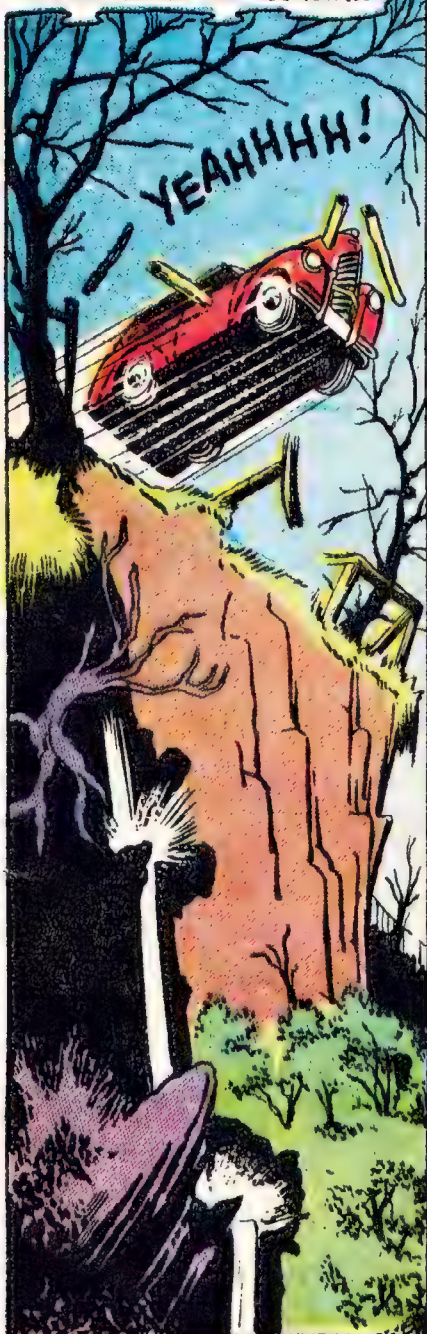
NOT MUCH HELP IN THOSE POTIONS AND HEXES YOU BELIEVE IN, IS THERE? WE'RE HEADING STRAIGHT TOWARD SUICIDE TURN...AND THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT! JUST FOR THE LAUGHS I'LL TELL YOU WHAT I'M PLANNING...



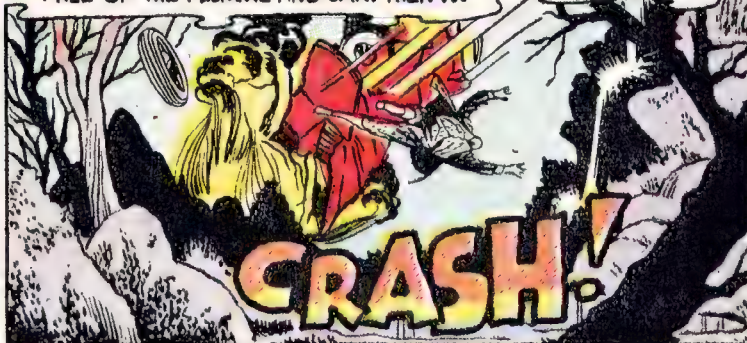
SOON'S I UNLOAD MY BAGGAGE, I'M RELEASING THE BRAKE...THIS CRATE'LL PLUMMET TWO HUNDRED FEET INTO THE RAVINE. I'VE ALREADY SET THE DASHBOARD CLOCK FORWARD TO MIDNIGHT...THE EXACT TIME WITNESSES WILL SEE ME ABOARD THE CRUISE BOAT PULLING OUT OF THE HARBOR!



DOWN THE DEADLY EMBANKMENT THE DEATH CAR PLUNGED, HURLING TOWARD CERTAIN DESTRUCTION...

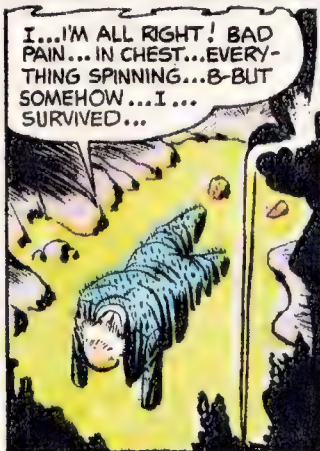


AT THE LAST SPLIT-SECOND, WARREN CAIRO IS MIRACULOUSLY HURLED FREE OF THE PLUMMETING CAR. THEN...



FOR SEVERAL MOMENTS THERE WAS ONLY THE SOUND OF FLAMES CRACKLING AROUND THE SKELETON OF THE CRUSHED CAR. SLOWLY A FIGURE MOVED...

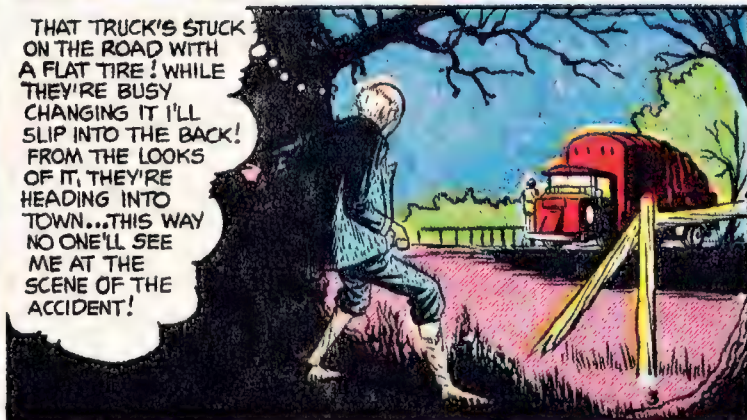
I...I'M ALL RIGHT! BAD PAIN... IN CHEST... EVERYTHING SPINNING... B-BUT SOMEHOW... I... SURVIVED...



IT'S F-FREAK LUCK... BUT I'M STILL HERE! AND GERDA... TRAPPED INSIDE THAT FUNERAL PYRE! IF THE FALL DIDN'T KILL HER THE FIRE WILL! EVERYTHING LOOKS BURNT TO A CINDER... I'LL HAVE TO LEAVE MY LUGGAGE AND CLEAR OUT!

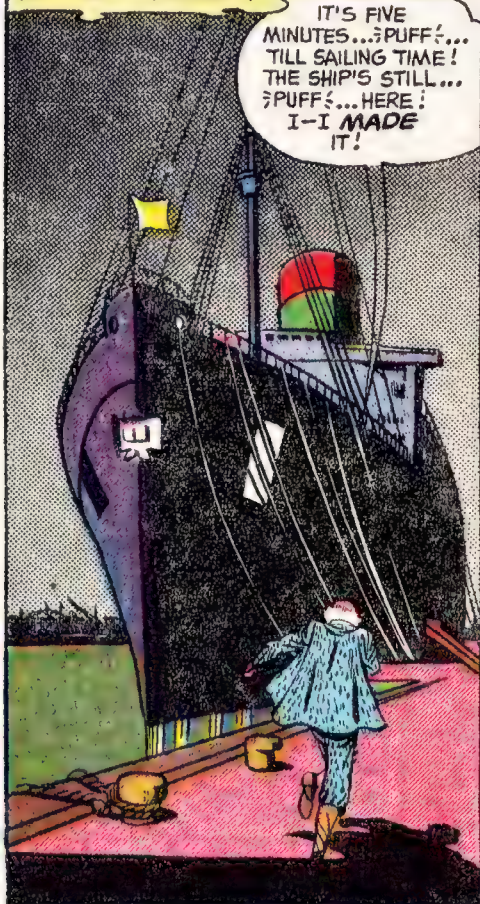


THAT TRUCK'S STUCK ON THE ROAD WITH A FLAT TIRE! WHILE THEY'RE BUSY CHANGING IT I'LL SLIP INTO THE BACK! FROM THE LOOKS OF IT, THEY'RE HEADING INTO TOWN... THIS WAY NO ONE'LL SEE ME AT THE SCENE OF THE ACCIDENT!



AFTER A FEW MINUTES THE TRUCK MOVED OFF, WITH WARREN CAIRO CROUCHING UNSEEN IN THE BACK. AT LAST IT RUMBLLED INTO THE CITY, WHERE ...

IT'S FIVE MINUTES...PUFF!... TILL SAILING TIME! THE SHIP'S STILL... PUFF!... HERE! I-I MADE IT!



T-THANK GOD NO ONE WAS ON DECK EXCEPT THE PURSER... AND HE WAS SO BUSY WITH LATE ARRIVALS HE HARDLY SEEMED TO NOTICE HOW BATTERED I LOOK! I'LL STAY HERE IN MY CABIN FOR A FEW HOURS...GIVE THESE BRUISES A CHANCE TO HEAL!

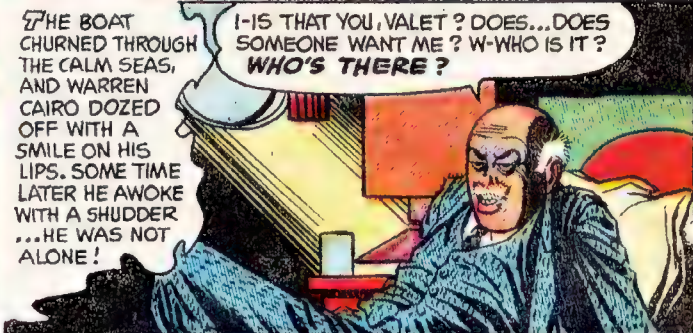


I CAN FEEL THE ROLL OF THE WAVES...WE'RE UNDER WAY! AND I GOT ABOARD IN TIME! NOW THEY CAN'T BLAME ME FOR GERDA'S DEATH...I CAN PROVE I WAS AT SEA AT THE TIME OF THE ACCIDENT! HA, HA, HA! AND HER FORTUNE... IT REVERTS TO ME AS HER ONLY HEIR!



THE BOAT CHURNED THROUGH THE CALM SEAS, AND WARREN CAIRO DOZED OFF WITH A SMILE ON HIS LIPS. SOME TIME LATER HE AWOKE WITH A SHUDDER...HE WAS NOT ALONE!

I-IS THAT YOU, VALET? DOES...DOES SOMEONE WANT ME? W-WHO IS IT? WHO'S THERE?



IT IS I, WARREN...YOUR VERY OWN GERDA! CARELESS OF YOU TO WALK OFF WITH MY PRIZED CAT'S EYE RING! I HAVEN'T BEEN SO FORGETFUL... I'VE BROUGHT A BON VOYAGE GIFT!

G-GO AWAY, YOU GHOUL...YOU'RE DEAD! I SAW YOU WITH MY OWN EYES!



WARREN RECOILED IN DREAD, FRANTICALLY REASSURING HIMSELF HE WAS HAVING A HIDEOUS NIGHTMARE. BUT THERE WAS NO DENYING THE PRESSURE OF THE SLIMY HANDS DRAGGING HIM TOWARDS THE SHIP'S HOLD...

YOU DON'T SEE TOO WELL, WARREN...THERE'S NO ONE TO HEAR YOU! I'M GOING TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR DEFECTIVE VISION, THOUGH...

H-HELP ME, SOMEONE...

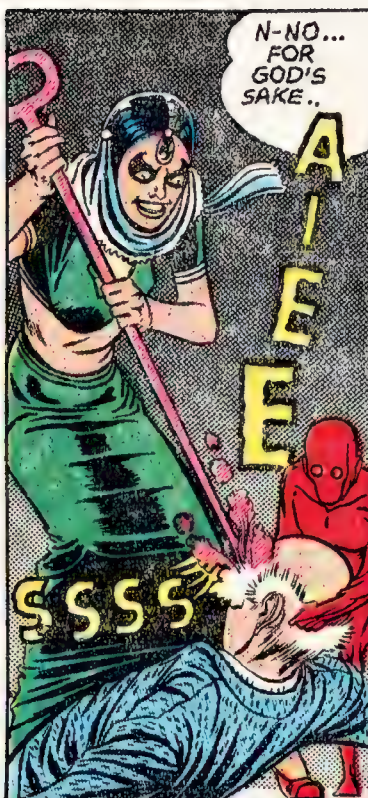
HELP!





I-IT'S A DREAM
...A NIGHT-
MARE!
IT'S NOT
HAPPENING
...IT **CAN'T**
BE!

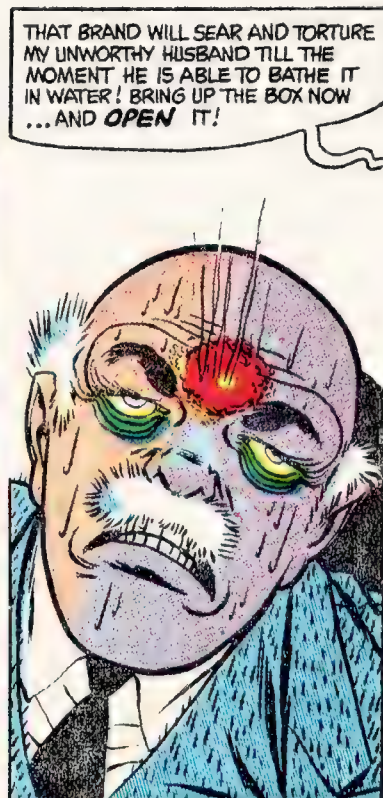
CHAIN HIM GOOD AND TIGHT!
THIS WHITE-HOT BRAND
WILL MAKE HIM REALIZE
HOW DREADFULLY WIDE-
AWAKE HE IS!



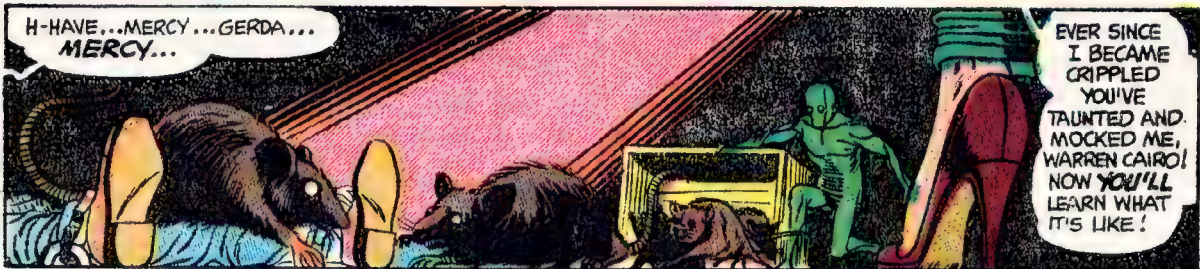
N-NO...
FOR
GOD'S
SAKE..

A
I
E
E
E

SSSSSS



THAT BRAND WILL SEAR AND TORTURE
MY UNWORTHY HUSBAND TILL THE
MOMENT HE IS ABLE TO BATHE IT
IN WATER! BRING UP THE BOX NOW
...AND **OPEN** IT!



H-HAVE...MERCY...GERDA...
MERCY...

EVER SINCE
I BECAME
CRIPPLED
YOU'VE
TAUNTED AND
MOCKED ME,
WARREN CAIRO!
NOW **YOU'LL**
LEARN WHAT
IT'S LIKE!



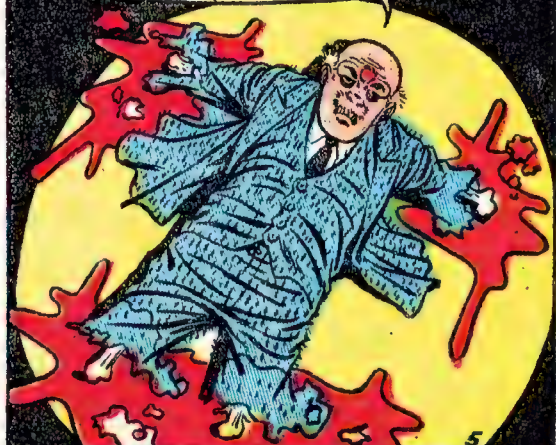
EVEN AS THE IMAGE OF GERDA FADED,
THE MONSTROUS RATS WERE RIPPING
AT WARREN'S BLEEDING FLESH, THEIR
JAGGED FANGS SLASHING AND
MUTILATING...

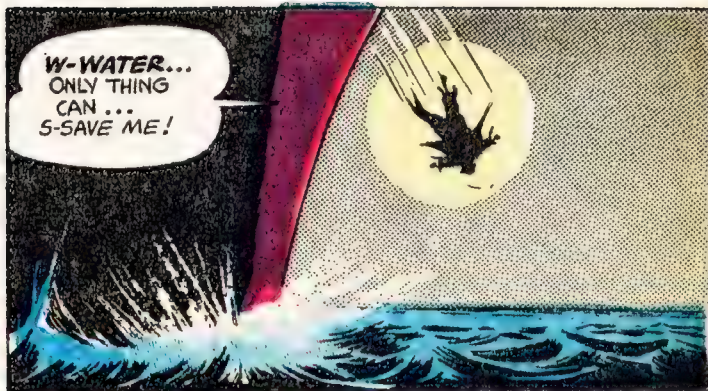


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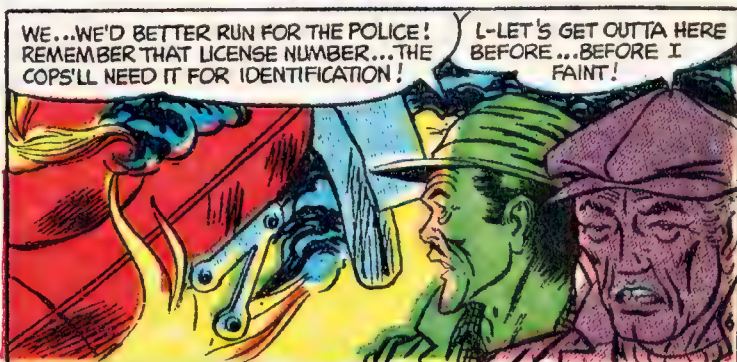
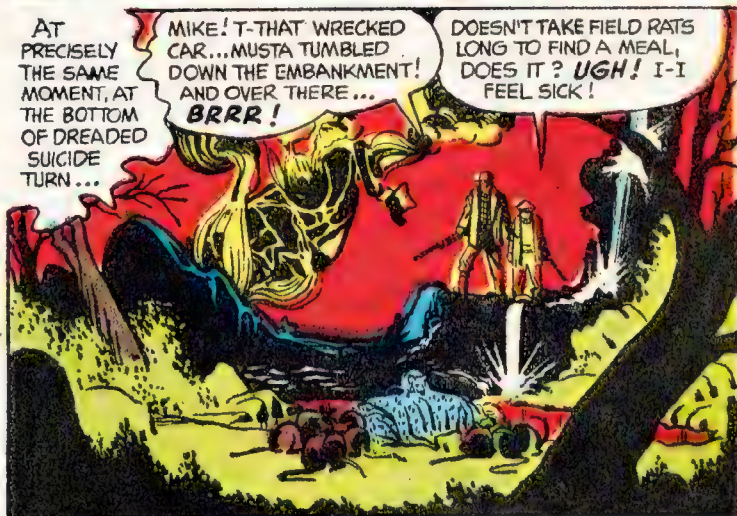
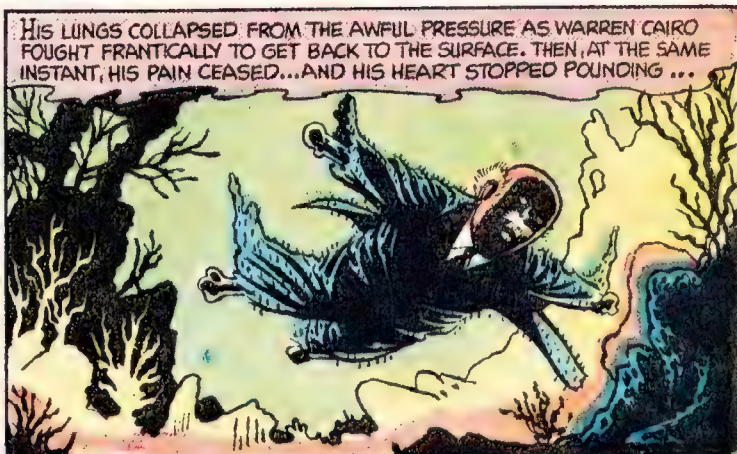
AN ETERNITY OF TORTURE PASSED FOR WARREN CAIRO,
AS HE FAINTED AND REVIVED A DOZEN TIMES. THE
GRUESOME ATTACKS CEASED AT LAST, AND...

M-MY HANDS...THEY'VE BEEN CHEWED OFF!
AND MY LEGS...GOOD LORD...NOTHING BUT
BLOODY STUMPS WHERE MY FEET WERE!
B-BUT THE CHAINS ARE LOOSE...





DOWN INTO THE MURKY DEPTHS OF THE SEA WARREN CAIRO PLUNGED...DOWN...**DOWN!**



THE HORRIFIED HUNTERS SCRAMBLED UP THE STEEP EMBANKMENT, THE BLOOD RUNNING COLD IN THEIR VEINS. THE TELEPHONE LINES CRACKLED, THEN ...

N-NEVER SAW RATS THAT SIZE IN THIS AREA.

MEBBE THIS'LL SCATTER 'EM!

BRANG! BRANG!

GEEZ! H-HIS HANDS AND FEET...THEY BEEN GNAWED OFF BY THEM RATS! WE...WE BETTER COVER UP THE CORPSE BEFORE SOMEONE WITH A WEAK STOMACH SEES IT!

HOLD IT, COREY! MOTORCYCLE IS BRINGING SOMEONE TO MAKE IDENTIFICATION!

HEADQUARTERS TRACED THAT LICENSE NUMBER ...THEY'RE RUSHING A NEIGHBOR OR SOMEONE OVER TO TAKE A LOOK AT THE BODY!

WONDER WHAT KILLED THE POOR BUZZARD? THE CRASH... THE RATS... OR DROWNING IN THIS LI'L POOL OF WATER?

TURN 'IM FACE-UP, COREY...THEY'RE BRINGING DOWN THE PERSON WHO'S GONNA MAKE THE IDENTIFICATION!

UGH! W-WHY DO I ALWAYS GET THE LOUSY JOBS? I-I HOPE IT ONLY TAKES A FEW SECONDS TO GET THIS GRISLY BUSINESS OVER WITH!

G-GOOD GOD! E-EVER SEE ANYTHING LIKE THAT? ON...ON HIS FOREHEAD...AN EYE OF SOME KIND! S-SEEMS TO BE BRANDED THERE! C-CAN YOU IDENTIFY THE CORPSE ...?

IT'S WARREN CAIRO, AS YOU SUSPECTED, GENTLEMEN!

T-THANKS FOR COOPERATING, MRS. CAIRO! IT MUST BE A TERRIBLE SHOCK...

I CAN'T SAY I DIDN'T EXPECT IT! I WARNED HIM...BUT HE REFUSED TO SEE WHAT I MEANT ABOUT PREMONITIONS OF DISASTER! POOR WARREN!

The End

FAR SIGHTED WOMAN, THAT GERDA CAIRO...MIGHT EVEN BE DESCRIBED AS **SUPER HUMAN**, DON'T YOU THINK? HEE HEE HEE HEE!

The Thing

THE TIME: SEVERAL YEARS AGO. THE PLACE: A RUGGED DESERT TOWN CALLED FRENCHMAN'S KNIFE. THE VICTIM: A MAN ACCUSED OF ROBBERY AND KILLING AN OLD MINER NAMED SAM JONES. THE VERDICT:

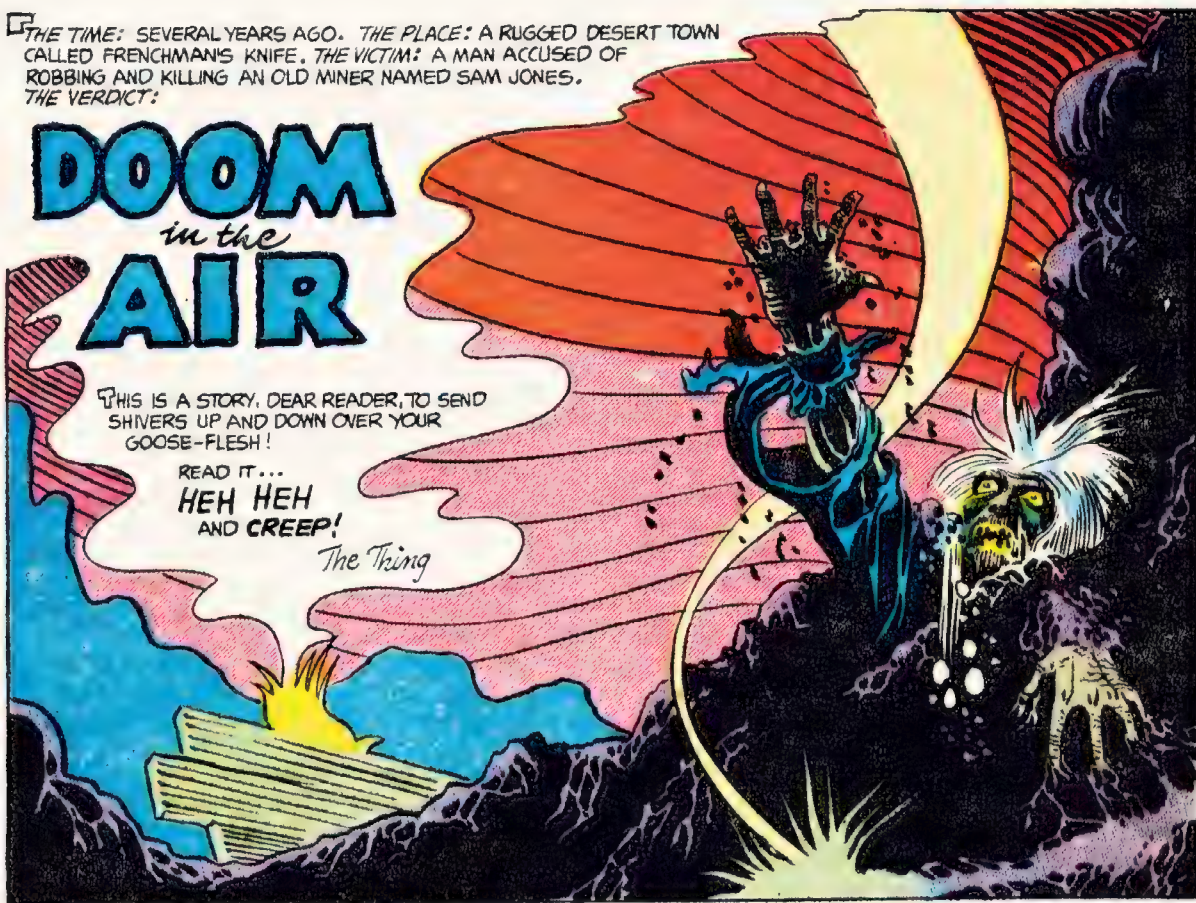
DOOM in the AIR

THIS IS A STORY, DEAR READER, TO SEND SHIVERS UP AND DOWN OVER YOUR GOOSE-FLESH!

READ IT...

HEH HEH
AND CREEP!

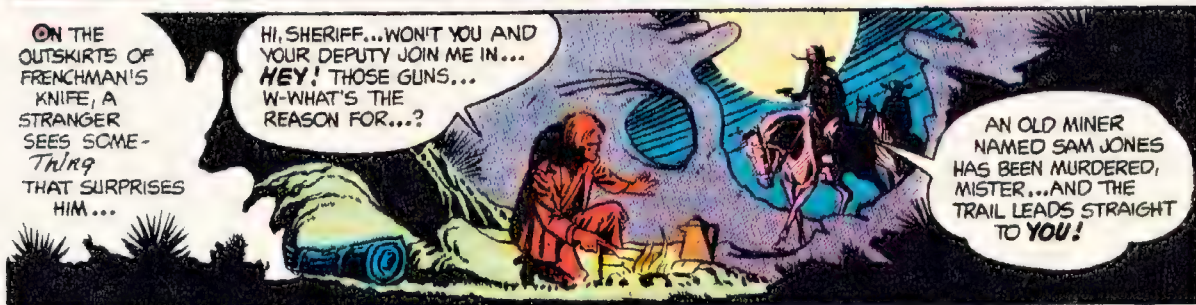
The Thing



ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF FRENCHMAN'S KNIFE, A STRANGER SEES SOME-
Thing
THAT SURPRISES HIM...

HI, SHERIFF... WON'T YOU AND YOUR DEPUTY JOIN ME IN...
HEY! THOSE GUNS...
W-WHAT'S THE REASON FOR...?

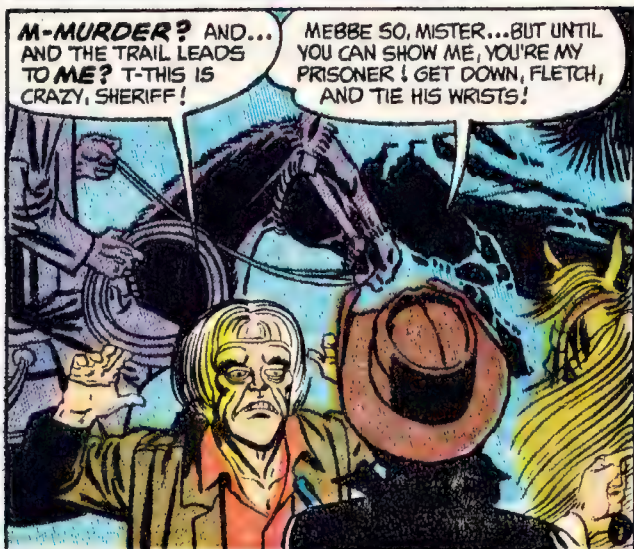
AN OLD MINER NAMED SAM JONES HAS BEEN MURDERED, MISTER... AND THE TRAIL LEADS STRAIGHT TO YOU!

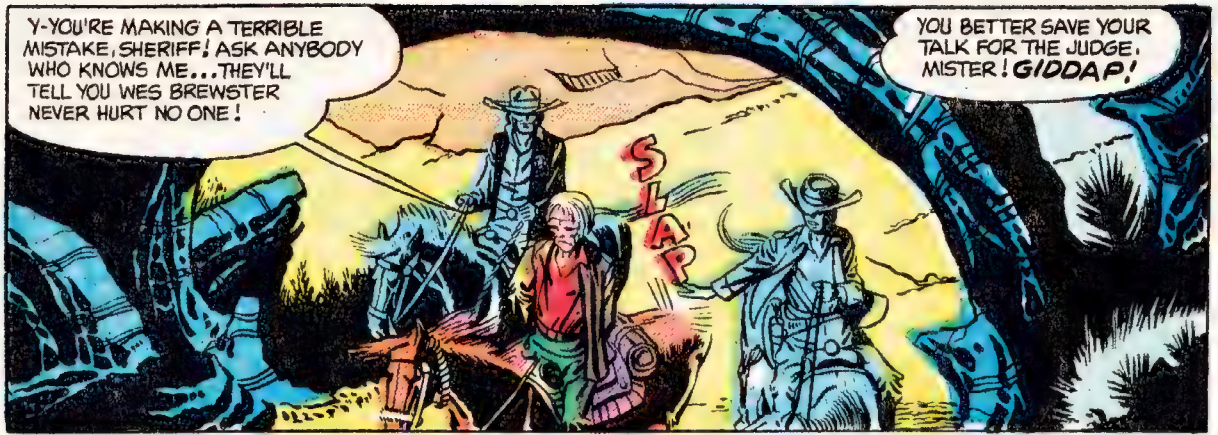


M-MURDER? AND... AND THE TRAIL LEADS TO ME? T-THIS IS CRAZY, SHERIFF!

MEBBE SO, MISTER... BUT UNTIL YOU CAN SHOW ME, YOU'RE MY PRISONER! GET DOWN, FLETCH, AND TIE HIS WRISTS!

I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, MISTER... BUT I'LL GUARANTEE ONE THING. **YOU'LL GET A FAIR TRIAL!** IF YOU'RE INNOCENT, LIKE YOU SAY, YOU'LL GO FREE. BUT IF YOU'RE GUILTY... I'LL HANG YOU **MYSELF!** NOW LET'S GET STARTED TO TOWN!





Y-YOU'RE MAKING A TERRIBLE MISTAKE, SHERIFF! ASK ANYBODY WHO KNOWS ME...THEY'LL TELL YOU WES BREWSTER NEVER HURT NO ONE!

YOU BETTER SAVE YOUR TALK FOR THE JUDGE, MISTER! **GIDDAP!**



HEY, BOSS, THAT DUST OVER YONDER... DON'T THAT LOOK LIKE...

THE JONES BROTHERS! THEY MUST'VE HEARD THAT WE WERE ON THE TRAIL OF THE GUY WHO ROBBED AND KILLED THEIR DAD!

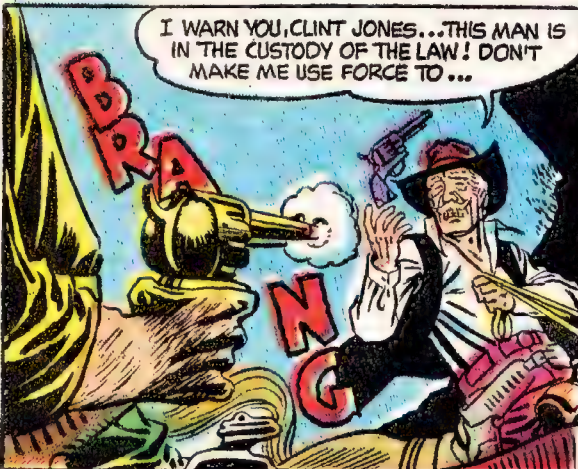


NOW LOOK HERE, CLINT JONES... I WANT YOU AND YOUR BROTHERS TO UNDERSTAND THAT THIS PRISONER IS **MINE!**

NOT ANY MORE, SHERIFF! ME, HUGH AND CHET ARE TAKING 'IM OFF'N YOUR HANDS!

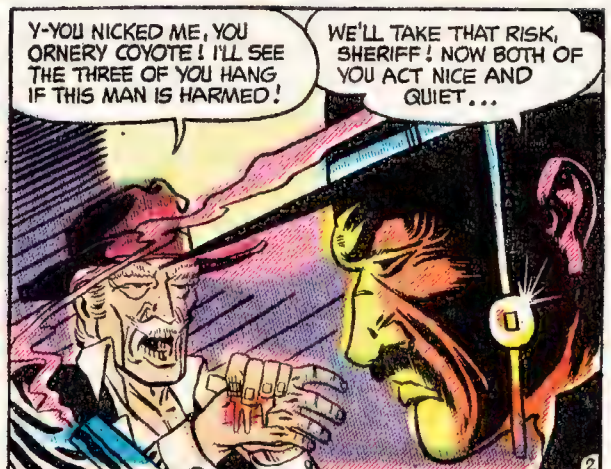


I WARN YOU, CLINT JONES...THIS MAN IS IN THE CUSTODY OF THE LAW! DON'T MAKE ME USE FORCE TO ...



Y-YOU NICKED ME, YOU ORNERY COYOTE! I'LL SEE THE THREE OF YOU HANG IF THIS MAN IS HARMED!

WE'LL TAKE THAT RISK, SHERIFF! NOW BOTH OF YOU ACT NICE AND QUIET...



Y-YOU CAN'T LET THESE LUNATICS TAKE ME, SHERIFF! I-I HAVEN'T EVEN BEEN GIVEN A CHANCE TO PROVE MY INNOCENCE...

YOU MURDERED OUR OLD MAN, STRANGER...ME AND MY BROTHERS'VE JUST TRIED AND CONVICTED YOU, SEE? NOW CLAM UP!



THAT HANGING TREE'LL BE FINE TO STRING UP THIS LOUSE!

YOU OUTTA YOUR MIND, CHET? THE SHERIFF FINDS THE BODY AND HE'LL HAVE THE THREE OF US FOR MURDER! WE GOTTA DO THIS SO THERE IS NO BODY! AND I KNOW HOW!



T-THE OLD ABANDONED LEAD MINE...BUT THE CORPSE'LL BE FOUND HERE, TOO, WON'T IT?

NOT THE WAY I GOT IT PLANNED, CHET! DRAG 'IM OFF'N HIS HORSE, HUGH!



Y-YOU CAN'T SHOOT ME HERE, LIKE A DOG! GIVE ME A CHANCE...I'M INNOCENT, I TELL YOU!

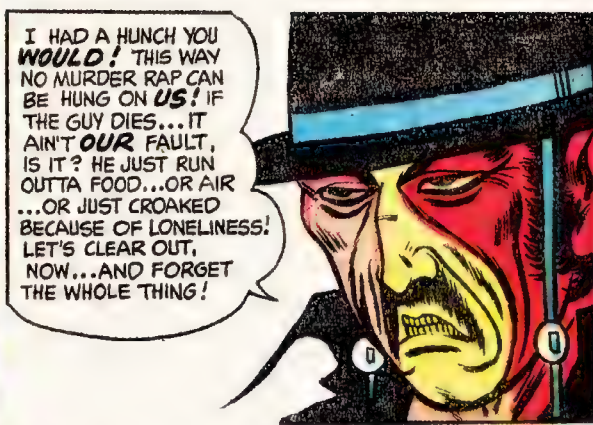
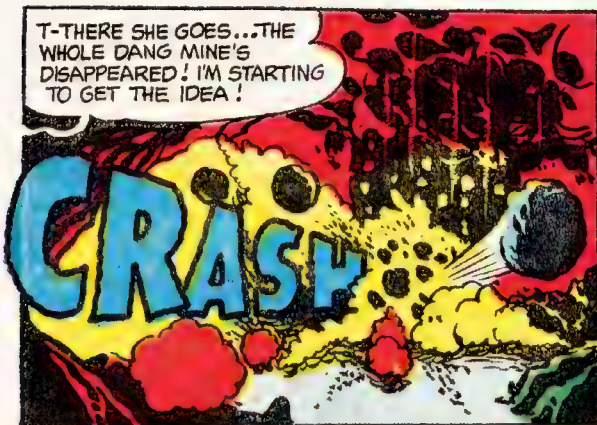
WHO MENTIONED **SHOOTING**, FELLER? YOU'LL GET A CHANCE TO LIVE...THE SAME KINDA CHANCE YOU GAVE OUR FATHER!



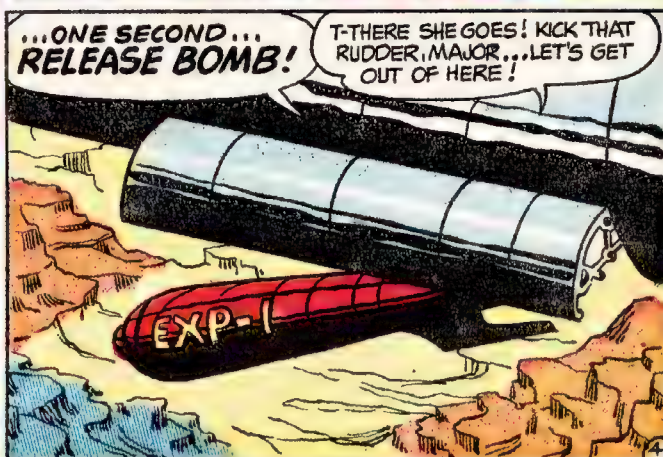
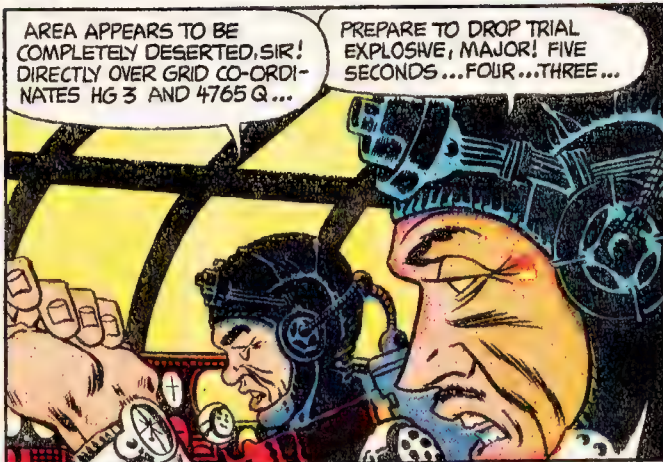
I-I DON'T GET THE IDEA AT ALL, CLINT... WHAT'S TO KEEP 'IM FROM JUST WALKING FREE?

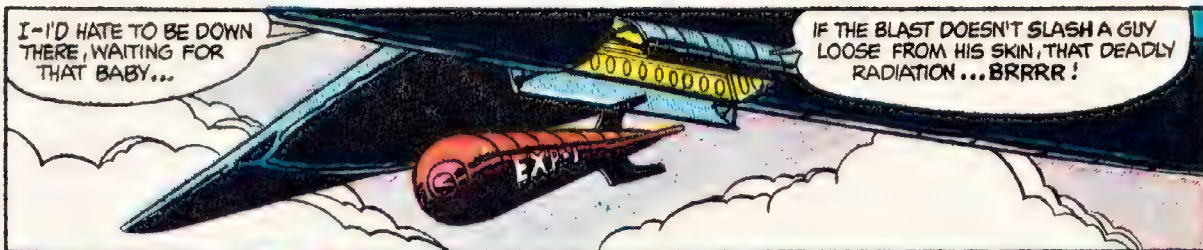
THEM SUPPORTING TIMBERS THAT HOLD UP THE MINE ENTRANCE, CHET! LET ME DO THE BRAIN WORK...YOU USE YOUR MUSCLES KNOCKING THEM PROPS LOOSE!





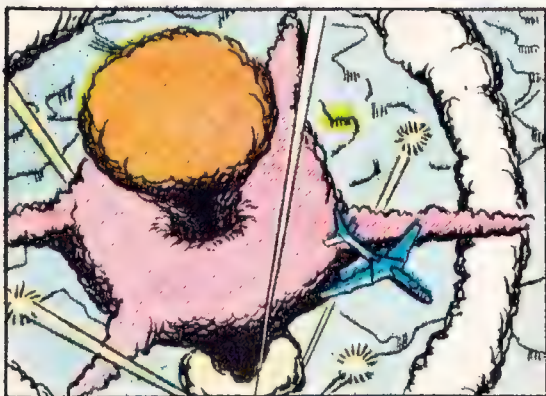
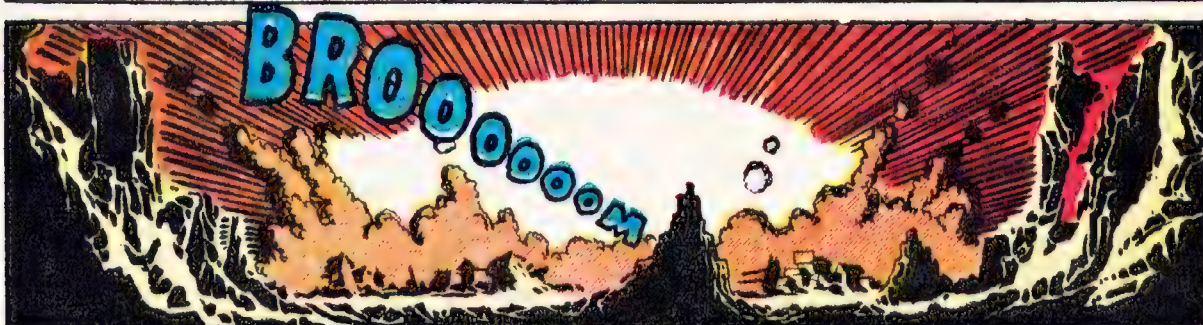
FIVE YEARS PASSED, AND THE ABANDONED LEAD MINE WAS FORGOTTEN...AS WAS THE STOLEN MURDER SUSPECT. FIVE YEARS LATER, AFTER THE TOWN OF FRENCHMAN'S KNIFE AND THE SURROUNDING DESERT HAD BEEN PURCHASED BY THE GOVERNMENT, AND CLEARED OF INHABITANTS...





I-I'D HATE TO BE DOWN THERE, WAITING FOR THAT BABY...

IF THE BLAST DOESN'T SLASH A GUY LOOSE FROM HIS SKIN, THAT DEADLY RADIATION... BRRRR!



AFTER A SEEMINGLY INTERMINABLE TIME, THE EAR-SPUTTING ROAR RECEDED... THE DUST SETTLED BACK TO EARTH. AND OUT OF THE GROUND CREPT A HIDEOUS *Thing*...

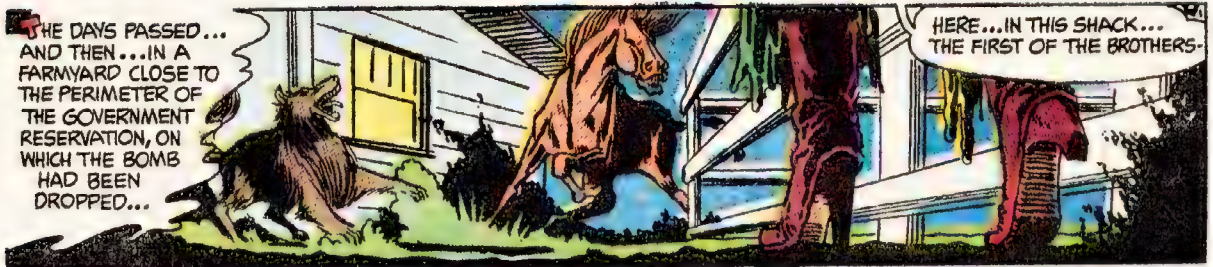


WHO WAS THIS CREATURE STAGGERING OUT OF THE RUBBLE? WAS IT THE LONG-FORGOTTEN WESLEY BREWSTER, FREED AT LAST FROM HIS GROTESQUE LIVING TOMB... OR SOME-*Thing* RETURNED FROM DEATH?



I-I FEEL STRANGE... AS IF I'M DREAMING! G-GOT TO GET CONTROL OF MYSELF... K-KEEP MY HANDS FROM SHAKING AND MY BRAIN FROM WHIRLING! GOT... GOT WORK TO DO... **REVENGE!**



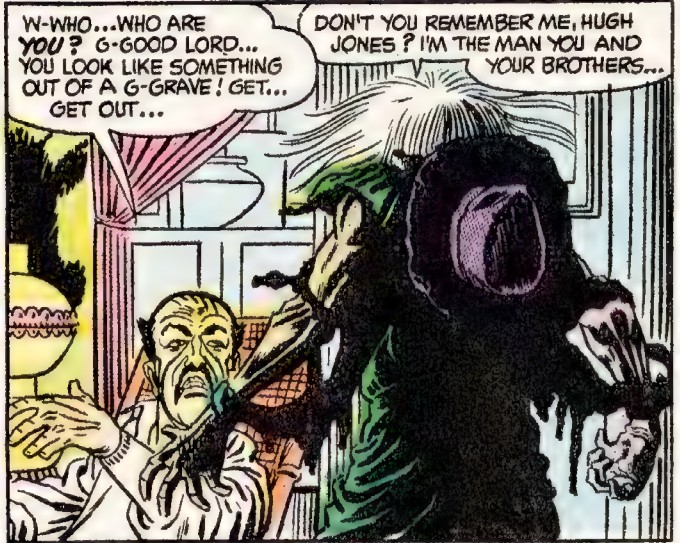


THE DAYS PASSED...
AND THEN...IN A
FARMYARD CLOSE TO
THE PERIMETER OF
THE GOVERNMENT
RESERVATION, ON
WHICH THE BOMB
HAD BEEN
DROPPED...

HERE...IN THIS SHACK...
THE FIRST OF THE BROTHERS...



HUGH JONES...ONE OF THE MEN WHO SENTENCED
ME TO YEARS OF HELL...IS ABOUT TO MEET HIS
VICTIM! DOOR'S OPEN AND...THAT'S STRANGE!
T-THOSE ANIMALS...L-LOOK AS IF THEY'RE
DYING...

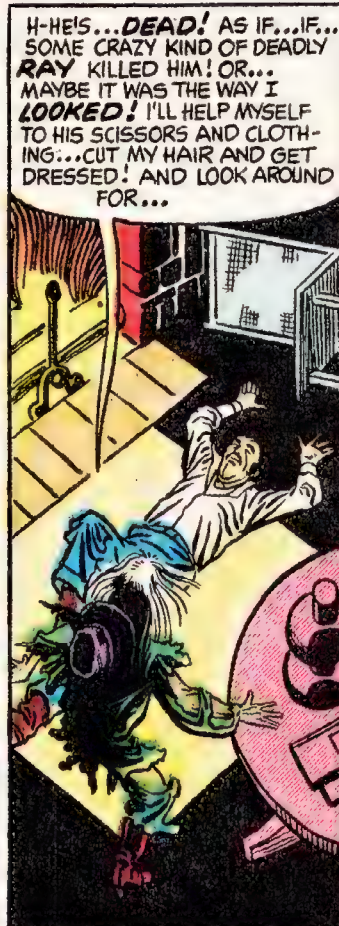


W-WHO...WHO ARE
YOU? G-GOOD LORD...
YOU LOOK LIKE SOMETHING
OUT OF A G-GRAVE! GET...
GET OUT...

DON'T YOU REMEMBER ME, HUGH
JONES? I'M THE MAN YOU AND
YOUR BROTHERS...



C-CANT...CAN'T BREATHE! FEEL...
AS IF...BURNING UP! WATER...
NEED...**ARGHHHH!**



H-HE'S...**DEAD!** AS IF...IF...
SOME CRAZY KIND OF DEADLY
RAY KILLED HIM! OR...
MAYBE IT WAS THE WAY I
LOOKED! I'LL HELP MYSELF
TO HIS SCISSORS AND CLOTH-
ING...CUT MY HAIR AND GET
DRESSED! AND LOOK AROUND
FOR...



...THIS IS JUST WHAT I WANT...A
LETTER FROM HUGH'S BROTHER,
CHET! IT'S GOT A RETURN ADDRESS...
NOT TOO FAR FROM HERE, EITHER! I'D
BETTER **WALK** THERE, SO AS NOT
TO AROUSE ANY SUSPICIONS!

THREE DAYS LATER, IN A NEARBY TOWN...

READ ALL ABOUT IT...
WUXTRY!

MIGHT BE A GOOD
IDEA FOR ME TO
FIND OUT WHAT'S
HAPPENED TO THE
WORLD WHILE I'VE
BEEN GONE!

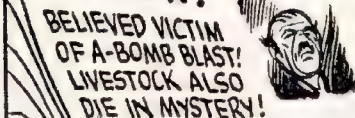
I'LL TAKE A
PAPER, SIR!



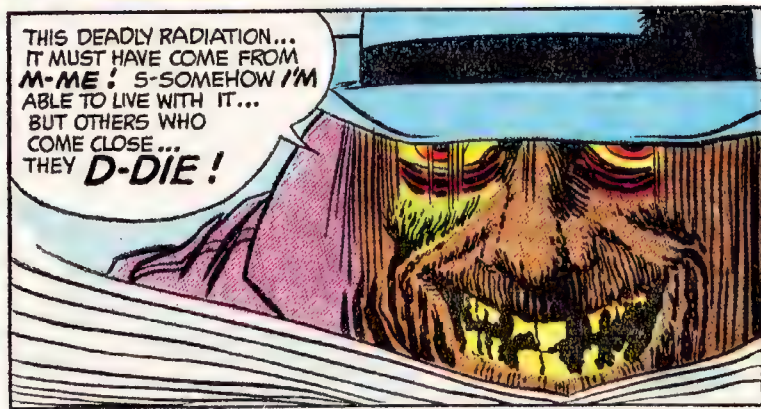
W-WHY...IT'S THE BROTHER I
JUST VISITED!

**FARMER KILLED BY
RADIATION!**

BELIEVED VICTIM
OF A-BOMB BLAST!
LIVESTOCK ALSO
DIE IN MYSTERY!



THIS DEADLY RADIATION...
IT MUST HAVE COME FROM
M-ME! S-SOMEHOW I'M
ABLE TO LIVE WITH IT...
BUT OTHERS WHO
COME CLOSE...
THEY **D-DIE!**



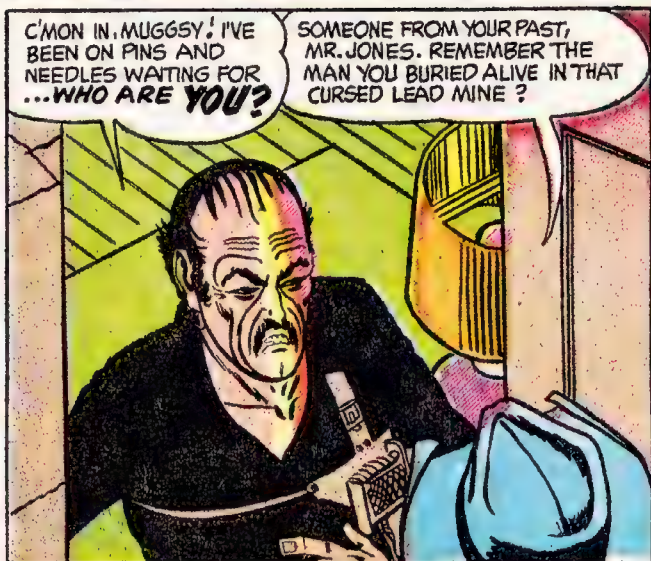
GLOATING OVER HIS
WEIRD POWERS,
WESLEY BREWSTER
...OR HIS VERY
TANGIBLE GHOST...
PROCEEDED ON
HIS MISSION...



THIS IS PRICELESS...UNHEARD OF!
THE SECOND BROTHER...**HEH
HEH...** DOESN'T KNOW WHAT'S
IN STORE FOR HIM!

C'MON IN, MUGGSY! I'VE
BEEN ON PINS AND
NEEDLES WAITING FOR
...**WHO ARE YOU?**

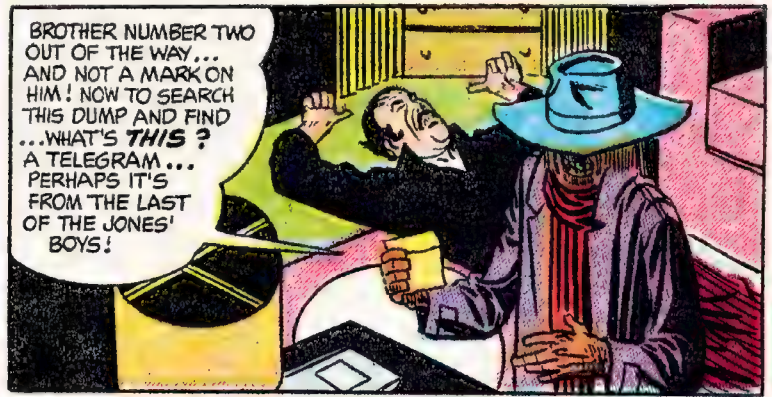
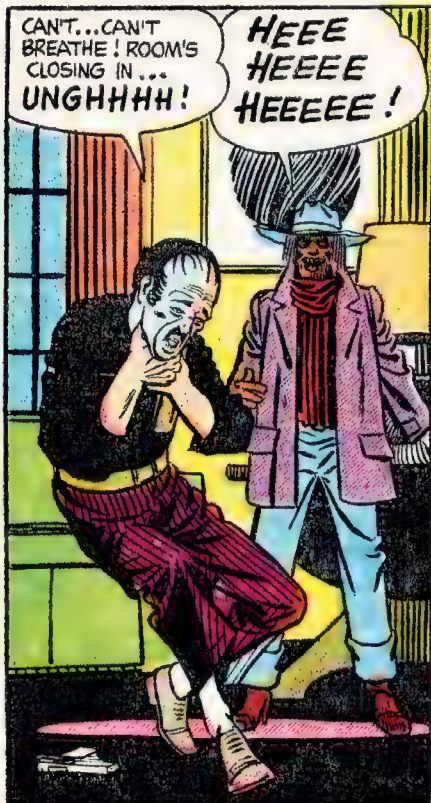
SOMEONE FROM YOUR PAST,
MR. JONES. REMEMBER THE
MAN YOU BURIED ALIVE IN THAT
CURSED LEAD MINE?



Y-YOU'RE NUTS...THAT GUY
MUSTA DIED **YEARS**
AGO! YOU...YOU MUST BE
A **COP**, DISGUISED AS A
...A...W-WHOLE ROOM'S
SPINNING!

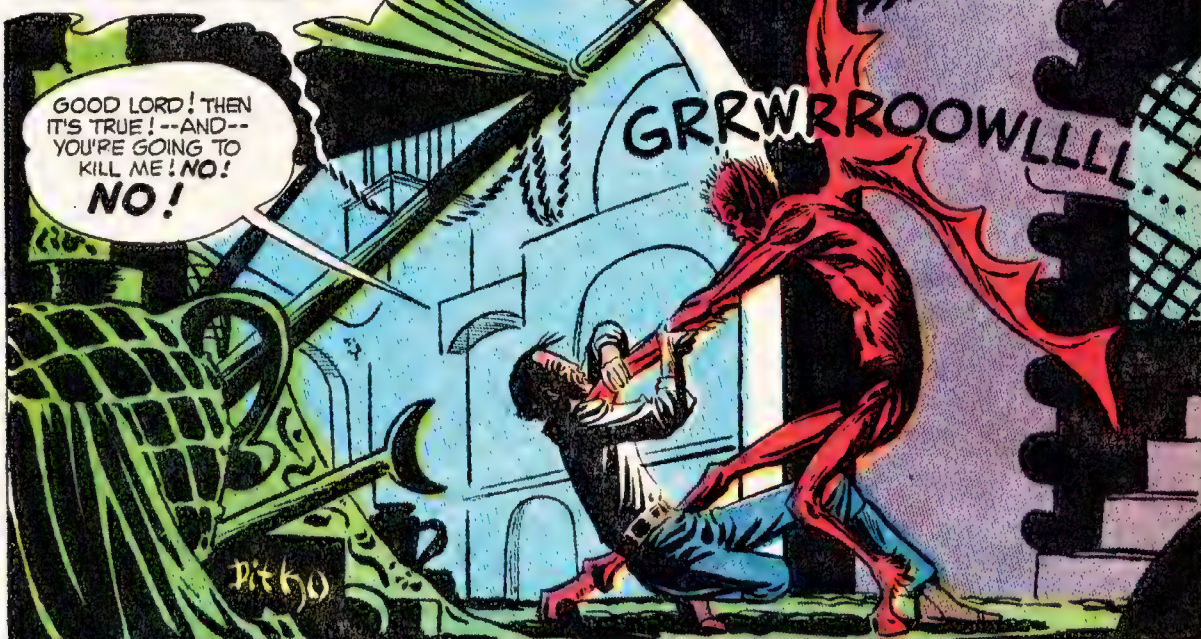
YOU'RE **DOOMED**,
CHET JONES!
THAT GUN CAN'T
HELP YOU!





EVER BELIEVE IN CURSES, SPELLS, THREATS, LEGENDS? WELL--- COME ALONG WITH ME AND FIND OUT HOW ONE SUCH CURSE CAME TRUE. CARL RAMEN WAS A YOUNG, SUCCESSFUL AND QUITE SCIENTIFIC YOUNG MAN--- UNTIL HE UNCOVERED THE DREAD SECRET FROM THE PAST---AND THUS FOUND HIS---

INHERITANCE!



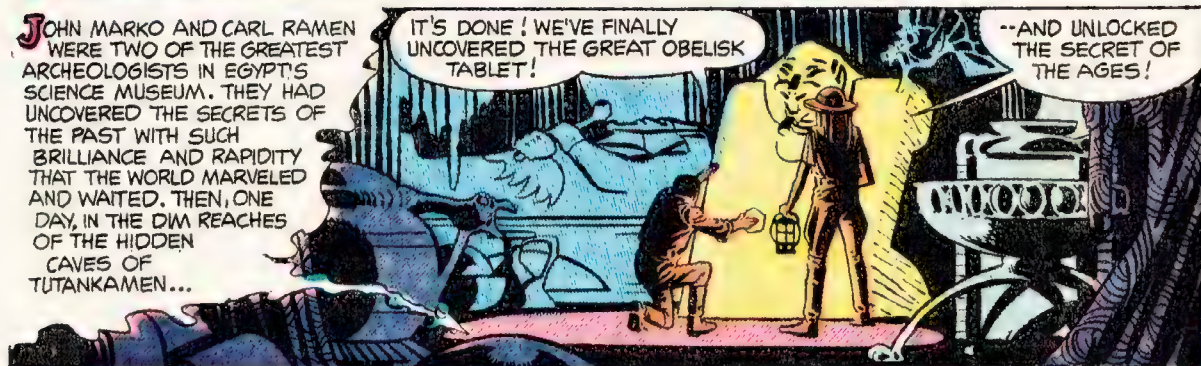
GOOD LORD! THEN IT'S TRUE!--AND-- YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME! **NO!**

Ditko

JOHAN MARKO AND CARL RAMEN WERE TWO OF THE GREATEST ARCHEOLOGISTS IN EGYPT'S SCIENCE MUSEUM. THEY HAD UNCOVERED THE SECRETS OF THE PAST WITH SUCH BRILLIANCE AND RAPIDITY THAT THE WORLD MARVELED AND WAITED. THEN, ONE DAY, IN THE DIM REACHES OF THE HIDDEN CAVES OF TUTANKAMEN...

IT'S DONE! WE'VE FINALLY UNCOVERED THE GREAT OBELISK TABLET!

--AND UNLOCKED THE SECRET OF THE AGES!

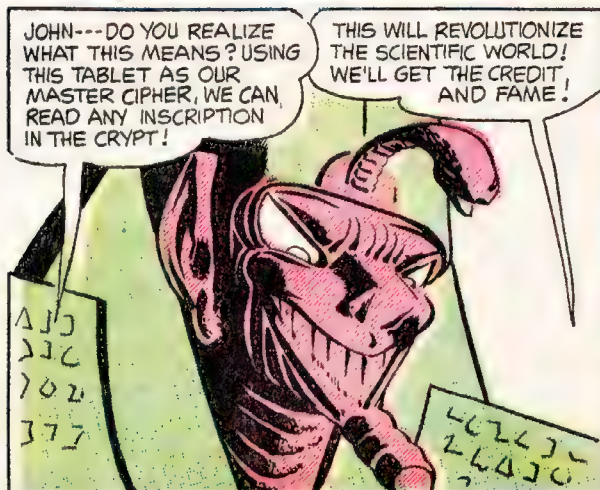


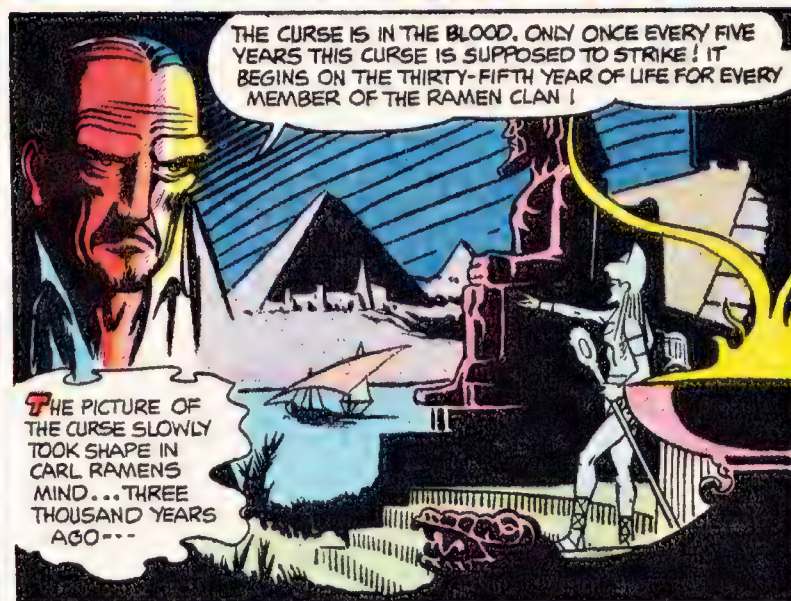
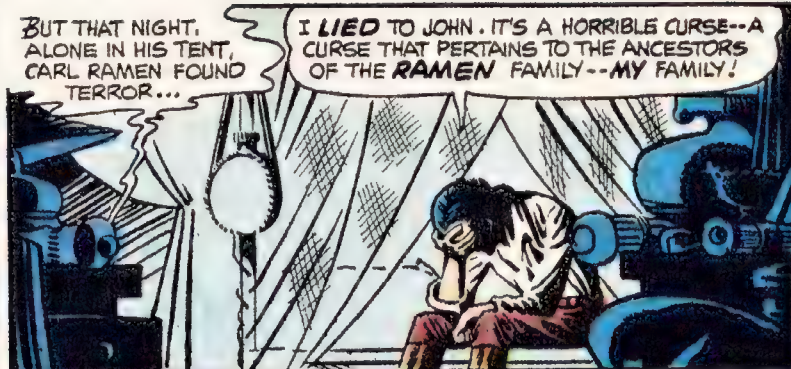
JOHN---DO YOU REALIZE WHAT THIS MEANS? USING THIS TABLET AS OUR MASTER CIPHER, WE CAN READ ANY INSCRIPTION IN THE CRYPT!

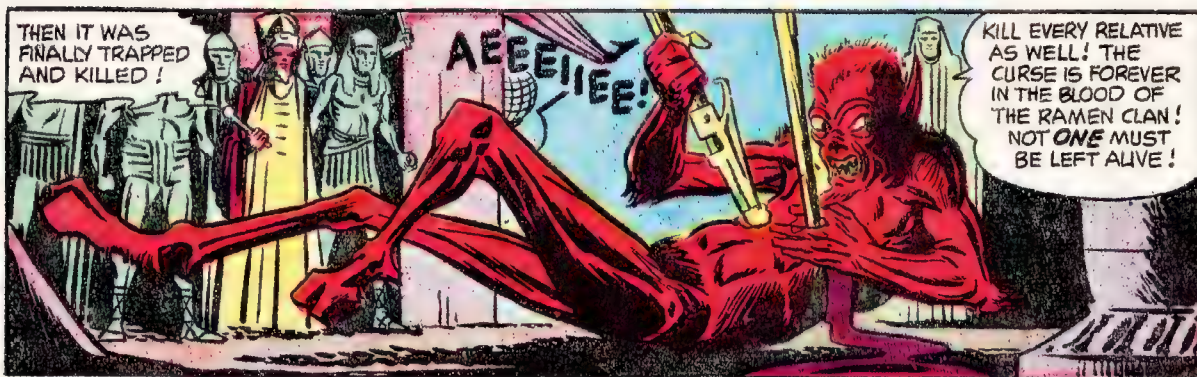
THIS WILL REVOLUTIONIZE THE SCIENTIFIC WORLD! WE'LL GET THE CREDIT AND FAME!

YOU'RE THE TRANSLATER, CARL. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

CAN'T MAKE IT OUT YET, JOHN. WAIT---I THINK I'M GETTING IT...







BUT CARL RAMEN KNEW THAT SUCH A ONE **WAS** LEFT ALIVE--HIS GREAT-GRAND FATHER--WHO LEFT WARNINGS TO CHILDREN AND **THEIR** CHILDREN ABOUT THE CURSE...

BUT NONE OF US EVER TOOK IT SERIOUSLY! THEN HOW EXPLAIN THE FACT THAT MY FATHER, AND **HIS** FATHER--ALL DISAPPEARED MYSTERIOUSLY WHEN THEY REACHED THIRTY FIVE YEARS OF AGE? HOW?



CARL RAMEN COULDN'T EXPLAIN! HE HAD TO ACCEPT IT AS FACT! BUT HE ALSO KNEW THAT HIS FRIEND JOHN MARKO HAD TO BE PROTECTED! THAT NEXT DAY INSIDE THE TOMB...

OUR WORK IS FINISHED HERE, JOHN. WE'LL SEAL THE CRYPT AND HEAD BACK TO THE CITY!

BUT WE HAVE TO CALL PORTERS IN TO CARRY BACK THE OBELISK TABLET!



NO! THE TABLET STAYS BURIED HERE! I DON'T WANT **ANYONE** TO TOUCH IT! UH--THAT IS...WE'LL COME BACK FOR IT WHEN WE'RE BETTER EQUIPPED!

ALL RIGHT, CARL. ANYTHING YOU SAY!



AND ALL ALONG THE JOURNEY BACK, CARL RAMEN WAS LOST IN DEEP THOUGHT...

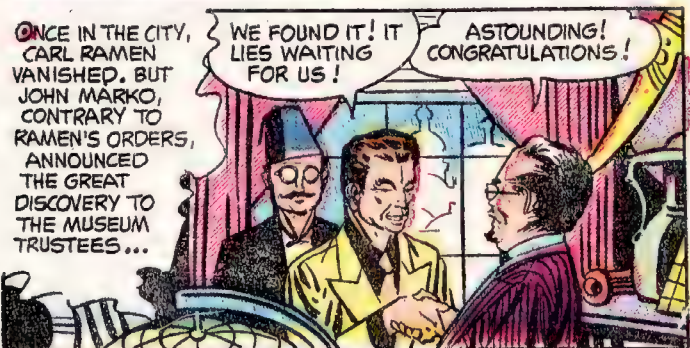


JOHN MUST NEVER FIND OUT. I'VE GOT TO DESTROY THE TOMB AND DISAPPEAR COMPLETELY! I CAN'T EVER GO NEAR HUMAN BEINGS AGAIN! I COULDN'T BEAR TO...**KILL!**

ONCE IN THE CITY, CARL RAMEN VANISHED. BUT JOHN MARKO, CONTRARY TO RAMEN'S ORDERS, ANNOUNCED THE GREAT DISCOVERY TO THE MUSEUM TRUSTEES...

WE FOUND IT! IT LIES WAITING FOR US!

ASTOUNDING! CONGRATULATIONS!

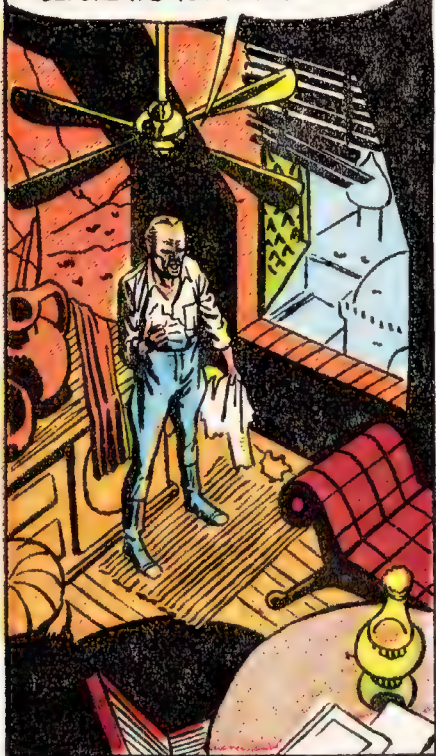


CARL RAMEN---GREAT SCIENTIST---DISCOVERS THE MASTER CIPHER OF ANTIQUITY!



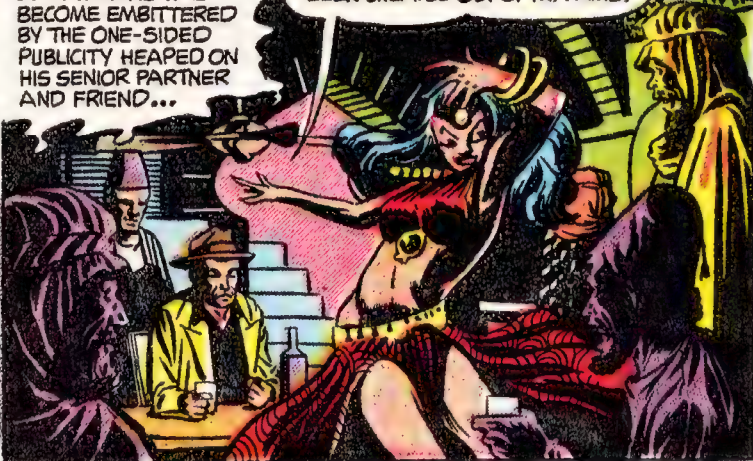
AND LATER, SOMEWHERE IN THE CITY,
CARL RAMEN ALSO SAW THE HEADLINES..

THE FOOLS! THEY'VE HEAPED ALL THE
CREDIT ON MY HEAD! I'VE GOT TO GET
BACK TO THAT TOMB AND DESTROY IT
BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!



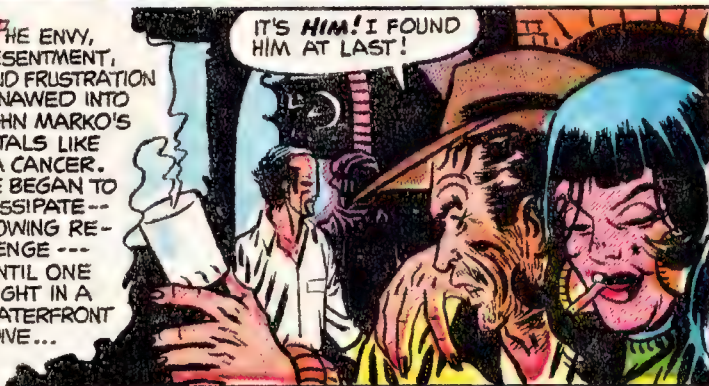
BUT THAT SAME NIGHT
JOHN MARKO HAD
BECOME EMBITTERED
BY THE ONE-SIDED
PUBLICITY HEAPED ON
HIS SENIOR PARTNER
AND FRIEND...

THE DISCOVERY WAS PARTLY **MINE!** I'VE
BEEN CHEATED OUT OF MY FAME!



THE ENVY,
RESENTMENT,
AND FRUSTRATION
GNAWED INTO
JOHN MARKO'S
VITALS LIKE
A CANCER.
HE BEGAN TO
DISSIPATE --
VOWING RE-
VENGE ---
UNTIL ONE
NIGHT IN A
WATERFRONT
DIVE...

IT'S **HIM!** I FOUND
HIM AT LAST!



I WANT TO
TALK TO YOU!
YOU HOGGED
THE SPOTLIGHT!
YOU'VE BEEN
SNUBBING ME
--TRYING TO
CHEAT ME
OUT OF MY
FAME!

GO AWAY, YOU
FOOL! I'VE DONE
NO SUCH THING!
I'M LEAVING FOR
THE TOMB IN A
FEW MINUTES--
RIGHT AFTER
THIS DRINK.



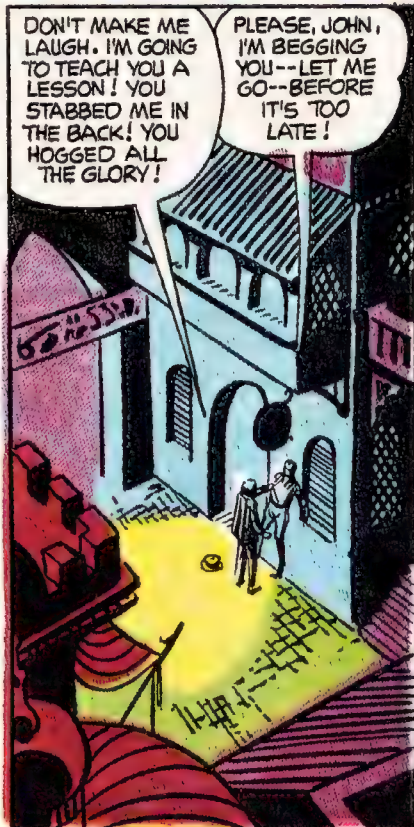
YOU'RE GOING OUTSIDE WITH ME!
YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME WHY
YOU WANT IT DESTROYED! I WAS
YOUR BEST FRIEND---AND NOW
I'M **NOBODY!**

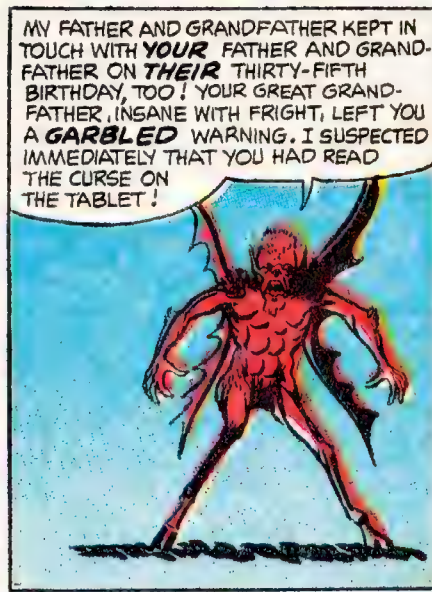
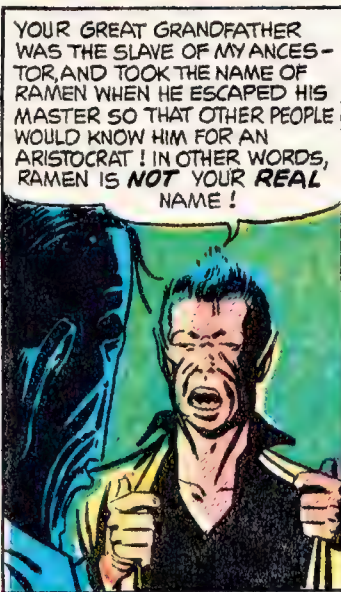
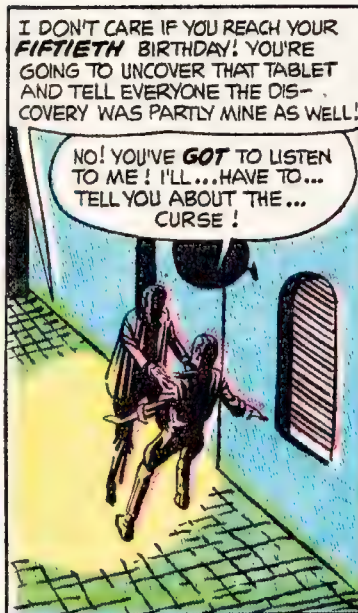
LET GO, JOHN.
DON'T ACT RASHLY, I
WARN YOU!



DON'T MAKE ME
LAUGH. I'M GOING
TO TEACH YOU A
LESSON! YOU
STABBED ME IN
THE BACK! YOU
HOGGED ALL
THE GLORY!

PLEASE, JOHN,
I'M BEGGING
YOU--LET ME
GO--BEFORE
IT'S TOO
LATE!





The
End



THE THING

No 15

THE

THING!

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION

10¢

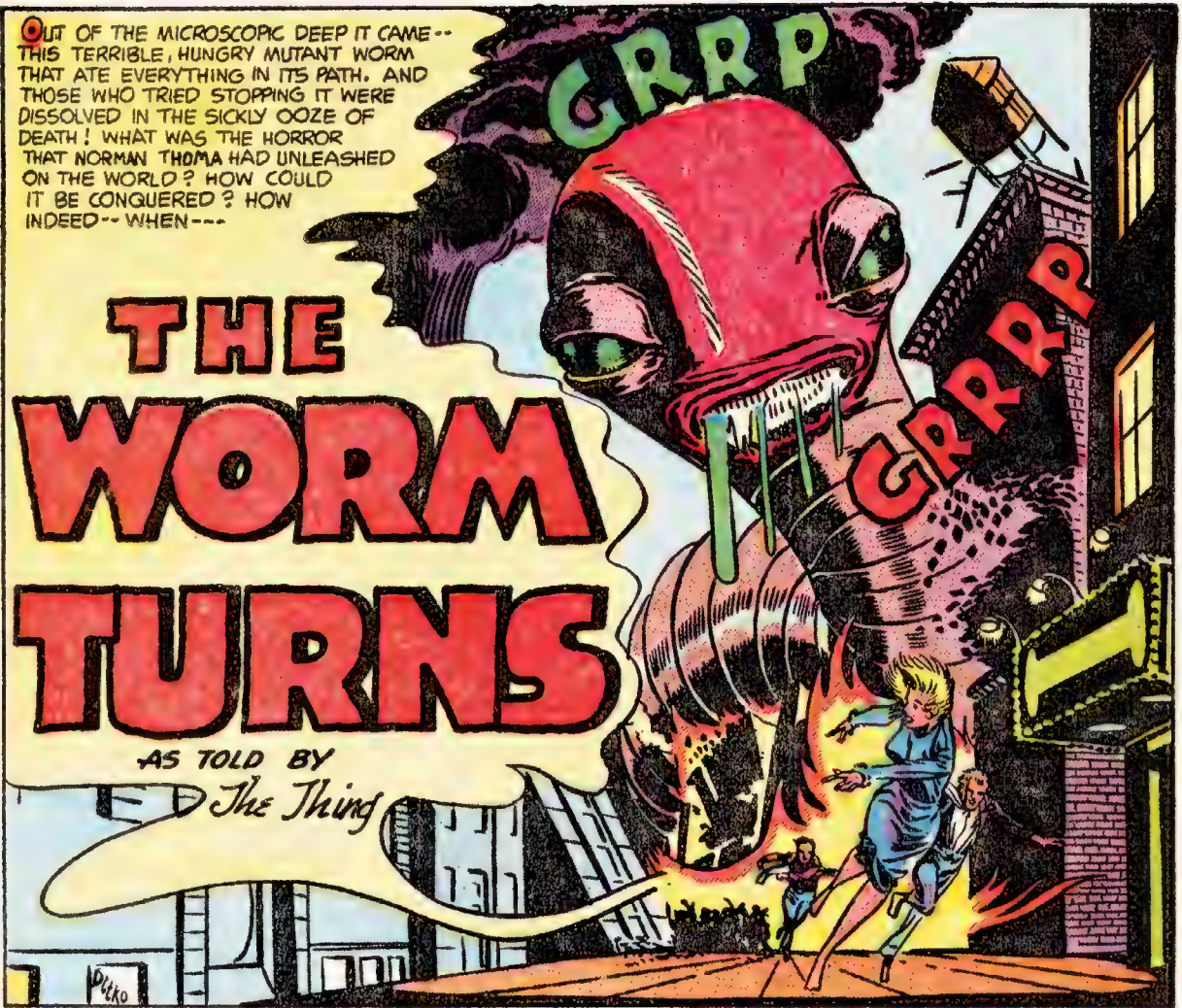


OUT OF THE MICROSCOPIC DEEP IT CAME--
THIS TERRIBLE, HUNGRY MUTANT WORM
THAT ATE EVERYTHING IN ITS PATH. AND
THOSE WHO TRIED STOPPING IT WERE
DISSOLVED IN THE SICKLY OOZE OF
DEATH! WHAT WAS THE HORROR
THAT NORMAN THOMA HAD UNLEASHED
ON THE WORLD? HOW COULD
IT BE CONQUERED? HOW
INDEED-- WHEN---

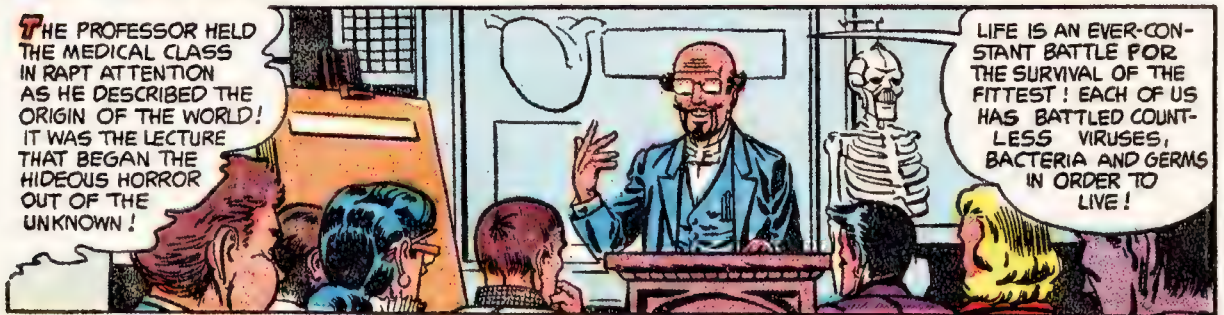
THE WORM TURNS

AS TOLD BY

ED *The Thing*



THE PROFESSOR HELD
THE MEDICAL CLASS
IN RAPT ATTENTION
AS HE DESCRIBED THE
ORIGIN OF THE WORLD!
IT WAS THE LECTURE
THAT BEGAN THE
HIDEOUS HORROR
OUT OF THE
UNKNOWN!



LIFE IS AN EVER-CON-
STANT BATTLE FOR
THE SURVIVAL OF THE
FITTEST! EACH OF US
HAS BATTLED COUNT-
LESS VIRUSES,
BACTERIA AND GERMS
IN ORDER TO
LIVE!



"BUT PICTURE TO
YOURSELF THE
WORLD AS IT
EXISTED MILLIONS
OF YEARS AGO--
WHERE SAVAGE

BEASTS ATE SAVAGE
BEASTS--AND
NONE BUT THE
MOST VICIOUS
SURVIVED...



ON SEA--ON LAND--EVERYWHERE
GIGANTIC CREATURES FOUGHT AND
BLED AND DIED TO GAIN A FEW MOMENTS
OF PRECIOUS LIFE ON THE WORLD...



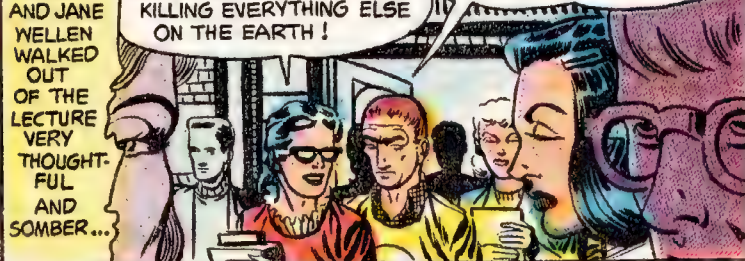
AND EVERYWHERE,
THE BALANCE OF
LIFE KEPT CONSTANT.
NO ONE SPECIES
MULTIPLIED TO
COMPLETELY OVER-
WHELM THE WORLD.
INSECTS FOUND
THEIR NATURAL
ENEMIES IN BIRD
AND MAN... AND
THE WORLD EVOLVED
NORMALLY...



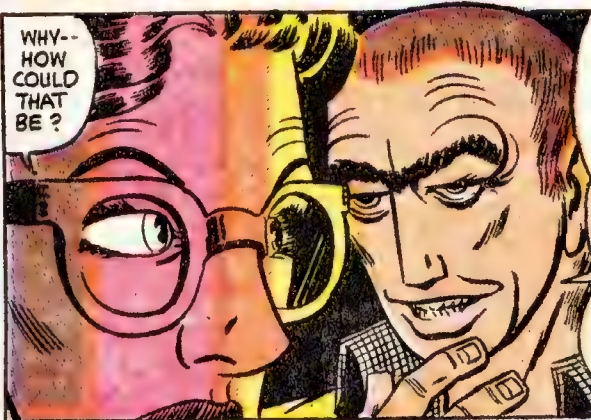
MEDICAL
STUDENTS
NORMAN
THOMA
AND JANE
WELLEN
WALKED
OUT
OF THE
LECTURE
VERY
THOUGHT-
FUL
AND
SOMBER...

JUST IMAGINE! TAKE AWAY THE
CHECKS AND BALANCE OF A
SPECIES AND IT CAN PROPO-
GATE TO THE POINT OF
KILLING EVERYTHING ELSE
ON THE EARTH!

IF ONLY WE COULD
CREATE SUCH A SPECIES,
JANE, WE COULD DISCOVER
THE SECRET OF LIFE!



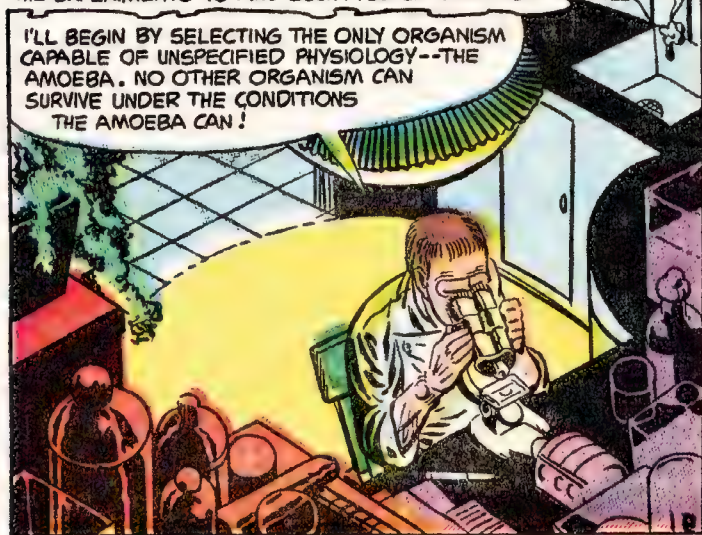
WHY--
HOW
COULD
THAT
BE?



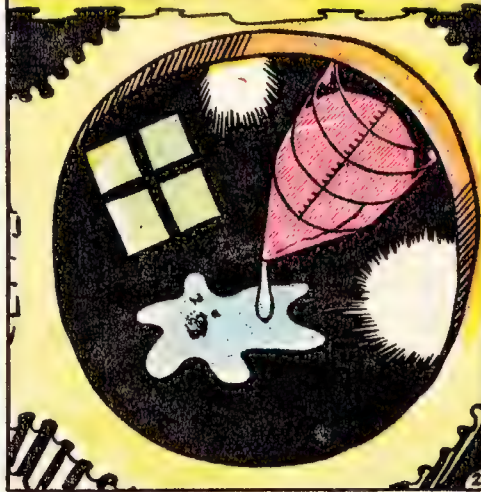
CONTROLLING
SUCH A
SPECIES CAN
ENABLE
ANYONE TO
CONTROL
LIFE. IF
LIFE IS
CONTROLLED,
WE CAN
WIPE OUT
CANCER,
ELIMINATE
DEATH--
GAIN
IMMORTALITY!

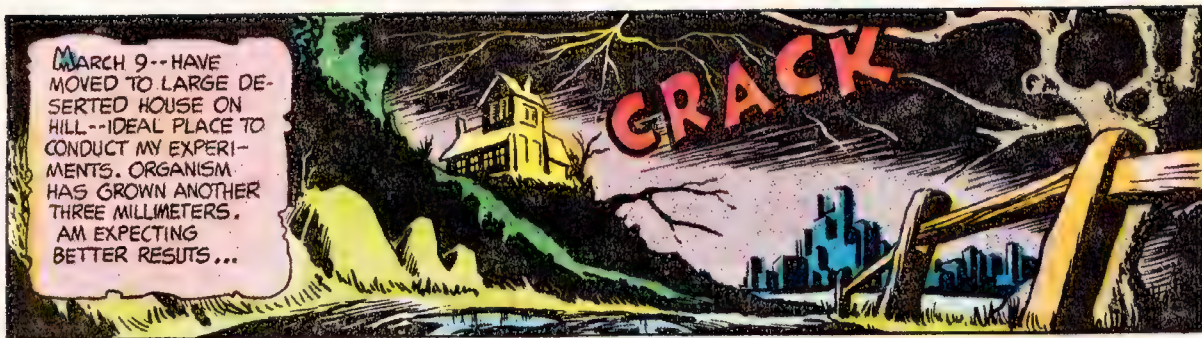
AND THAT WAS NORMAN THOMA'S FIRST CONTACT WITH THE IDEA.
TEN YEARS LATER, A SUCCESSFUL RESEARCH SCIENTIST, HE BEGAN
HIS EXPERIMENTS TO FIND SUCH A SUPER-SPECIES!

I'LL BEGIN BY SELECTING THE ONLY ORGANISM
CAPABLE OF UNSPECIFIED PHYSIOLOGY--THE
AMOEBA. NO OTHER ORGANISM CAN
SURVIVE UNDER THE CONDITIONS
THE AMOEBA CAN!



JANUARY 4... HAVE ELIMINATED ALL FORMS
OF AMOEBA BUT ONE--A LARGE GIANT TYPE
THAT SEEMS TO THRIVE ON ORGANIC
MATERIAL OF PUTREFACTION. AM ADDING
GROWTH LIQUID TO MUTATE ORGANISM...

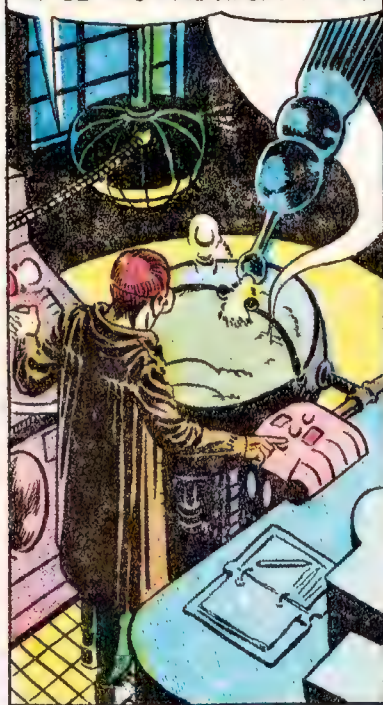




MARCH 9--HAVE MOVED TO LARGE DESERTED HOUSE ON HILL--IDEAL PLACE TO CONDUCT MY EXPERIMENTS. ORGANISM HAS GROWN ANOTHER THREE MILLIMETERS. AM EXPECTING BETTER RESULTS...

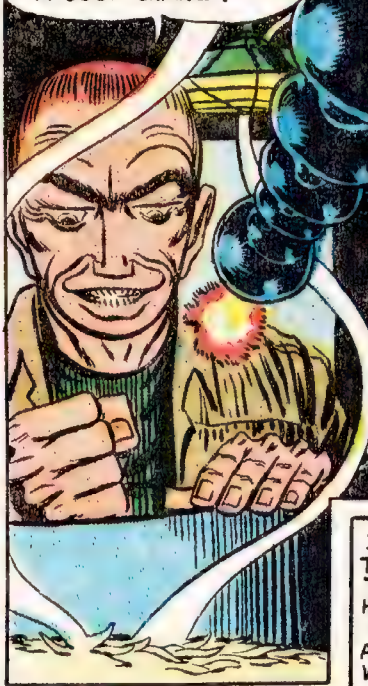
MAY 26--HAVE SUCCEEDED IN TRANSFERRING ORGANISM INTO NUTRIENT VAT. ORGANISM HAS TAKEN SHAPE OF SMALL EARTH WORM. WILL ADD CAREFULLY-REGULATED VOLTAGE FOR EFFECT...

NOTHING SEEMS TO BE HAPPENING! MAYBE I'M ON THE WRONG TRACK,



SEPTEMBER 14--SUCCESS! AT LEAST --FROM THIS PATH OF RESEARCH. ORGANISMS ARE MULTIPLYING AGAIN BUT NOT GROWING. VOLTAGE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE THE ANSWER...

MAYBE IF I ARRANGED THE COSMIC BOMBARDMENT TO INCLUDE ULTRA-VIOLET! IT'S A GOOD CHANCE!



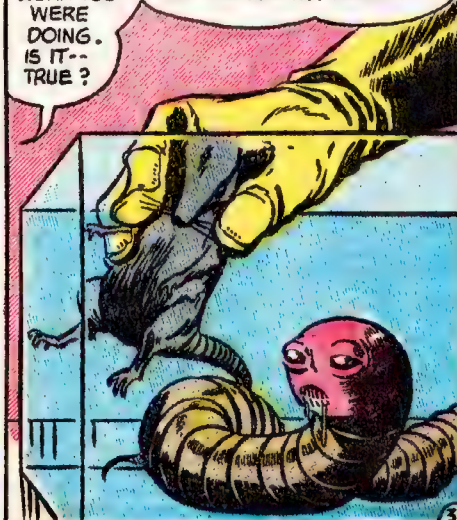
NOVEMBER 3...AFTER 1005 EXPERIMENTS TO CONTROL THE DEGREE OF ULTRA-VIOLET CONCENTRATION, HAVE ESTABLISHED RATIO TO CORRECT AMOUNT. AM PROCEEDING AS PLANNED.

THEY'RE GROWING IN SIZE. I'VE DISCOVERED ONE OF THE STEPS TO LIFE! NOW I'VE GOT TO SEE THAT THEY'RE INVULNERABLE!



I PLANNED TO VISIT YOU, THEN I HEARD WILD RUMORS ABOUT THE WORK YOU WERE DOING. IS IT--TRUE?

YES! I'VE SUCCEEDED BEYOND MY WILDEST EXPECTATIONS! I'VE CREATED A SUPER-SPECIES CAPABLE OF RESISTING ANY GERM, VIRUS OR ANIMAL ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH! WATCH!

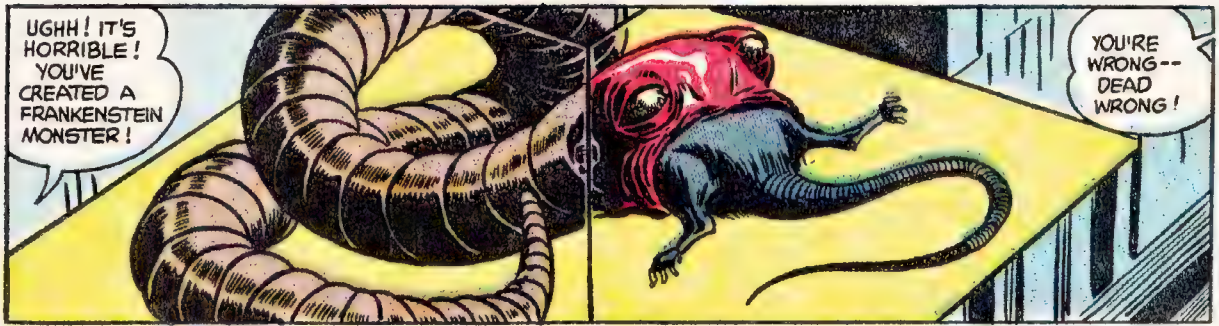


AND ONE AFTER-NOON WHILE THE SCIENTIST WORKED, THE DOOR SLOWLY OPENED, AND...

NORMAN! I'VE SEARCHED EVERYWHERE FOR YOU! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

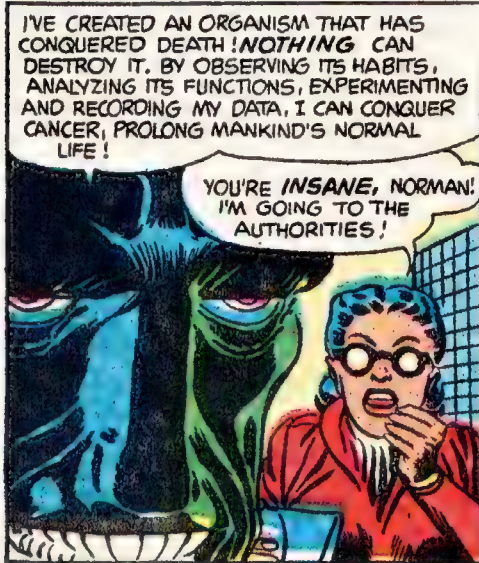
JANE! WHAT DO YOU WANT? GET OUT OF HERE! I'M BUSY!





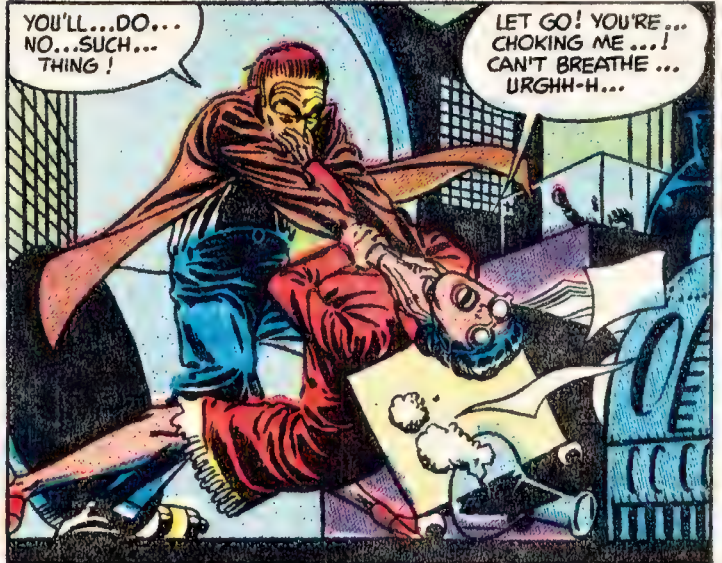
UGH! IT'S HORRIBLE! YOU'VE CREATED A FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER!

YOU'RE WRONG-- DEAD WRONG!



I'VE CREATED AN ORGANISM THAT HAS CONQUERED DEATH! **NOTHING** CAN DESTROY IT. BY OBSERVING ITS HABITS, ANALYZING ITS FUNCTIONS, EXPERIMENTING AND RECORDING MY DATA, I CAN CONQUER CANCER, PROLONG MANKIND'S NORMAL LIFE!

YOU'RE *INSANE*, NORMAN! I'M GOING TO THE AUTHORITIES!



YOU'LL...DO... NO...SUCH... THING!

LET GO! YOU'RE... CHOKING ME...! CAN'T BREATHE... URGH-H...



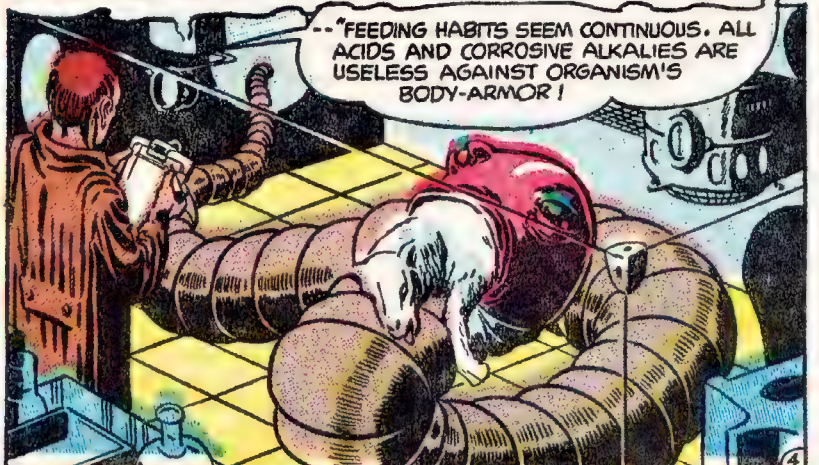
MOMENTS LATER, A SHATTERED MAN WAS SOBBING OVER THE SILENT BODY OF HIS VICTIM...

GOOD LORD! WHAT...HAVE...I DONE? I'VE... KILLED! I'VE KILLED!



BUT I KILLED SO THAT HUMANITY COULD BE BENEFITED! I CAN'T BE STOPPED NOW! AND I'VE GOT JUST THE WAY TO GET RID OF HER!

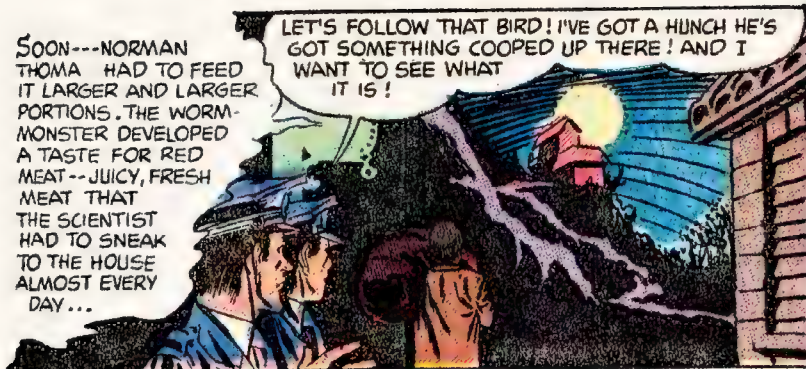
THE WORM-ORGANISM NOW BEGAN TO ACCELERATE IN GROWTH. ITS HUNGER WAS INSATIABLE. IT'S MAW DEVoured DOZENS OF CREATURES--BIG AND SMALL--AND ALWAYS ITS CREATOR OBSERVED AND TOOK NOTES...



--"FEEDING HABITS SEEM CONTINUOUS. ALL ACIDS AND CORROSIVE ALKALIES ARE USELESS AGAINST ORGANISM'S BODY-ARMOR!

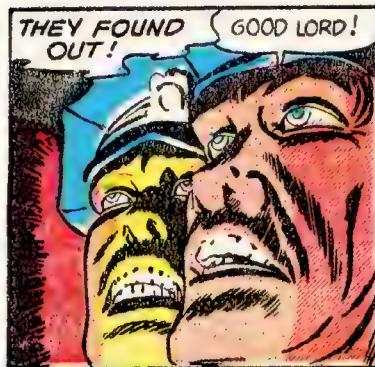
SOON---NORMAN THOMA HAD TO FEED IT LARGER AND LARGER PORTIONS. THE WORM-MONSTER DEVELOPED A TASTE FOR RED MEAT--JUICY, FRESH MEAT THAT THE SCIENTIST HAD TO SNEAK TO THE HOUSE ALMOST EVERY DAY...

LET'S FOLLOW THAT BIRD! I'VE GOT A HUNCH HE'S GOT SOMETHING COOPED UP THERE! AND I WANT TO SEE WHAT IT IS!

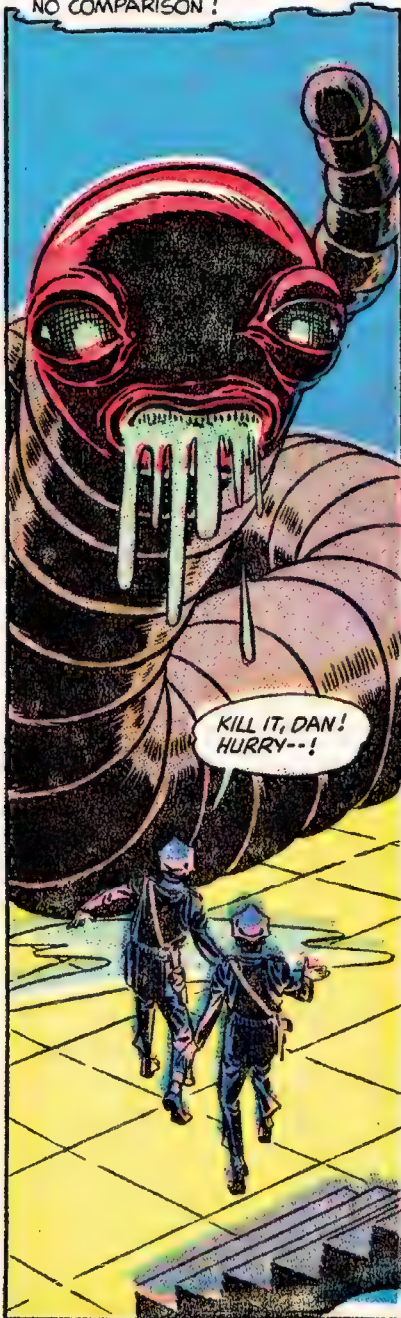


THEY FOUND OUT!

GOOD LORD!



FOR THERE--INSIDE THE CELLAR, TOWERED A HORROR THAT KNEW NO COMPARISON!



KILL IT, DAN! HURRY--!

NO! NOT YET--! DON'T DO IT! I'M NOT FINISHED WITH MY EXPERIMENTS. YOU'LL DESTROY THE SECRET OF LIFE, YOU FOOLS!

GET BACK, MISTER! YOU'RE NUTS!

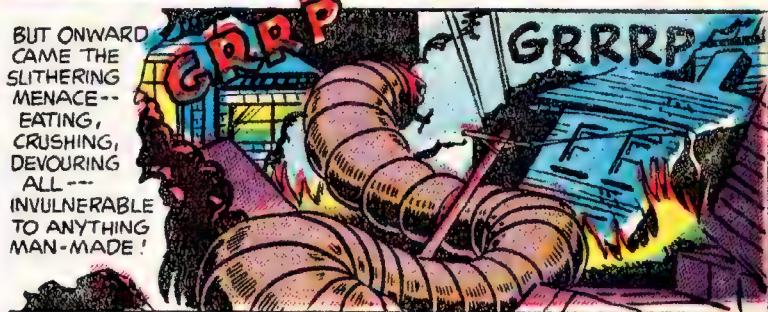


I'LL KILL AGAIN IF I MUST! I'LL-- AGHHHH!

BLAM BLAM



BUT ONWARD CAME THE SLITHERING MENACE-- EATING, CRUSHING, DEVOURING ALL--- INVULNERABLE TO ANYTHING MAN-MADE!



THE NATIONAL GUARDS, ARMY AND COMBINED ATTACK UNITS OF THE NATION CAME TO GRIPS WITH THE MONSTER-- BUT TO NO AVAIL!

ORDER A RETREAT! WE'RE WASTING OUR TIME!





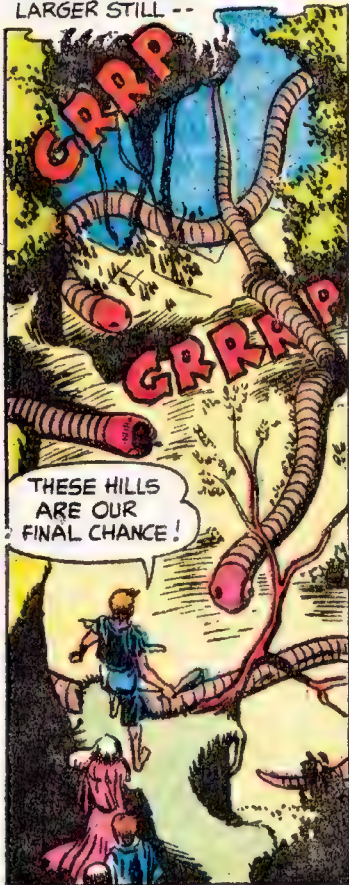
MANKIND RALLIED AGAINST THE WORM ---AND REELED BACK--DEFEATED! CITIES--MIGHTY FORTRESSES AGAINST SAVAGERY --TOPPLED TO THE GROUND!

FLEE FOR YOUR LIVES! THE WORM HUNTS FOR HUMANS!

LIFE CAME TO FULL CYCLE--THE WORM DIVIDED--MULTIPLIED--PRODUCED MYRIADS OF DUPLICATES. AND THOSE DUPLICATES ATE AND GREW LARGER STILL --

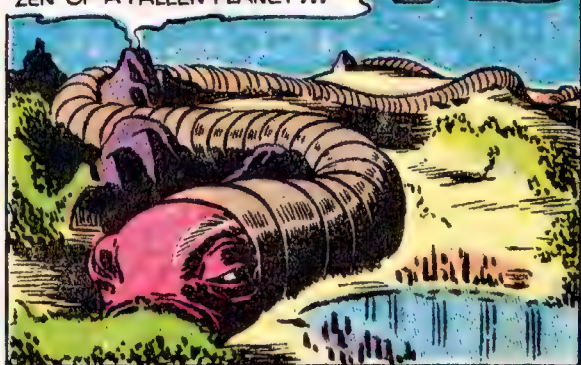
THE HYDROGEN BOMB, MICROBE WARFARE, NEW WEAPONS, SCIENTIFIC GADGETS--ALL PROVED HOPELESS --AND FINALLY THE WORM FACED MANKIND ON ITS LAST STAGE OF DEFENSE!

AND IN TIME, THE WORMS COMBINED INTO ONE GIANT WORM THAT COVERED THE GLOBE LIKE A FAT SLUG FEASTING ON VEGETATION, MINERAL--THE LAST DENIZEN OF A FALLEN PLANET ...

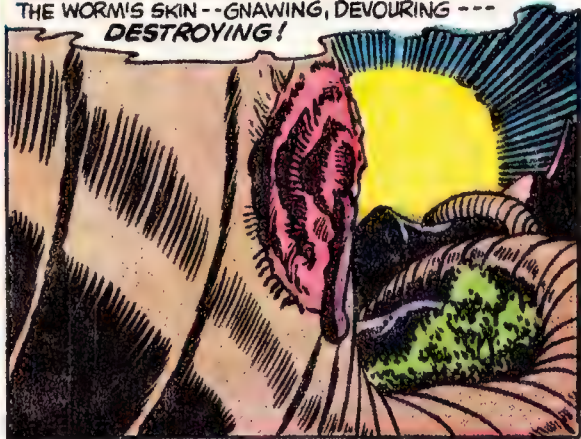


WE'LL ALL DIE! WE'RE THE LAST HUMANS ON EARTH!

THERE'S GOT TO BE ANOTHER WAY TO SURVIVE! THERE HAS TO BE!



FOR COUNTLESS EONS THE WORM CONTINUED FEEDING AND GROWING UNTIL LAYER COVERED LAYER---AND BULK PRODUCED BULK. THEN--ONE MORNING---A GREAT TUMOR-LIKE GROWTH APPEARED UNDERNEATH THE WORM'S SKIN--GNAWING, DEVOURING --- DESTROYING!



AND INSIDE--MAN, THE INGENIOUS--MAN THE INDESTRUCTIBLE-- HACKED AWAY AT THE DECAYED FLESH TOWARDS PURE AIR. FOR MANKIND HAD ESCAPED TO THE ONE PLACE THE WORM COULD NOT GO--INSIDE ITSELF. NORMAN THOMAS' DREAM OF LIFE HAD COME TRUE AFTER ALL FOR MAN, THE WORM'S WORM ---HAD TURNED AT LAST!



THOSE WHO KNEW HIM CALLED JABEZ GRIMM A TIGHT-FISTED SKINFUNT... A CADAVEROUS OLD TIGHTWAD WHO PINCHED A COIN SO HARD THE METAL FOREVER AFTER BORE HIS FINGERPRINT! WHILE HIS SHIPBUILDING YARD MADE HIM RICH, HIS WORKERS WALLOWED IN THE BITTEREST POVERTY. AND SO, IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT FINALLY THERE SHOULD COME A GRISLY...

DAY OF RECKONING!

as told By The Thing



DRIVE THE NAILS DEEP, BOYS! SEAL THE OLD DEVIL IN SO THAT HE'LL ROT IN THE HULL OF HIS OWN SHIP!

T-THE THREE OF YOU WILL DIE FOR THIS! WITH MY LAST BREATH I CURSE YOU!

THE SCHOONER, MERMAID WAS ALMOST COMPLETED. A FEW MORE BOARDS ADDED TO THE HULL... SAILS RUN UP... AND SHE'D BE READY FOR LAUNCHING. THAT WAS WHY ALL HIS WORKERS BUT THREE HAD BEEN DISMISSED BY MISERLY JABEZ GRIMM...

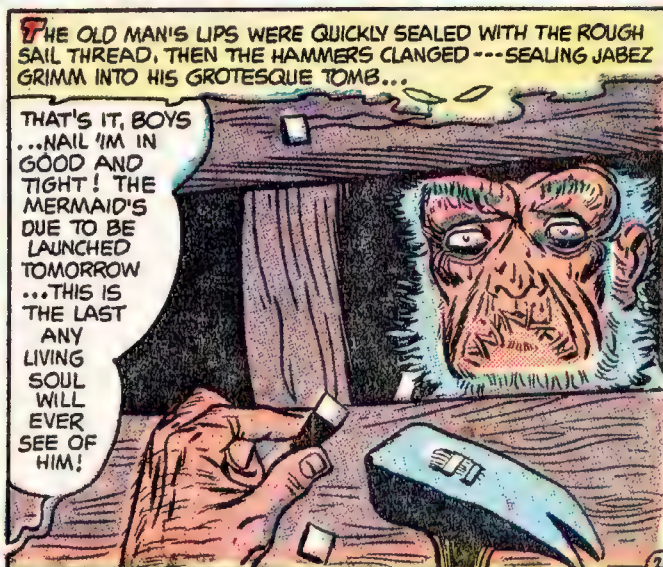
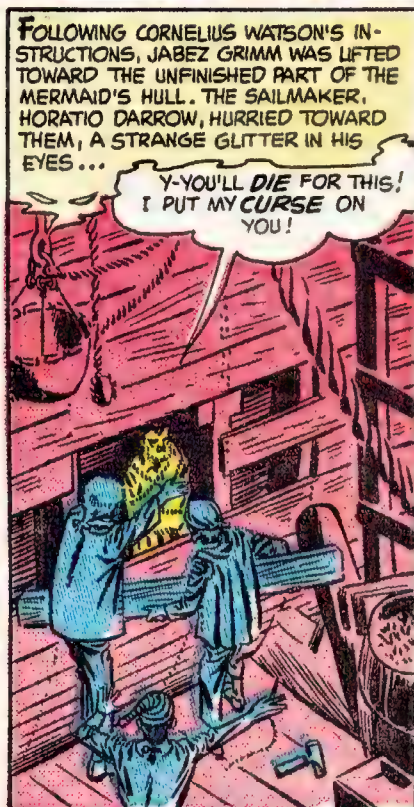


HERE COMES THE ANCIENT BUZZARD. NOW, HOPE HE'S GOT OUR WAGES WITH 'IM!



...AND HERE, HORATIO DARROW, IS YOUR MONEY! FINISH YOUR TASKS THEN CLEAR OUT! I WON'T BE NEEDING...

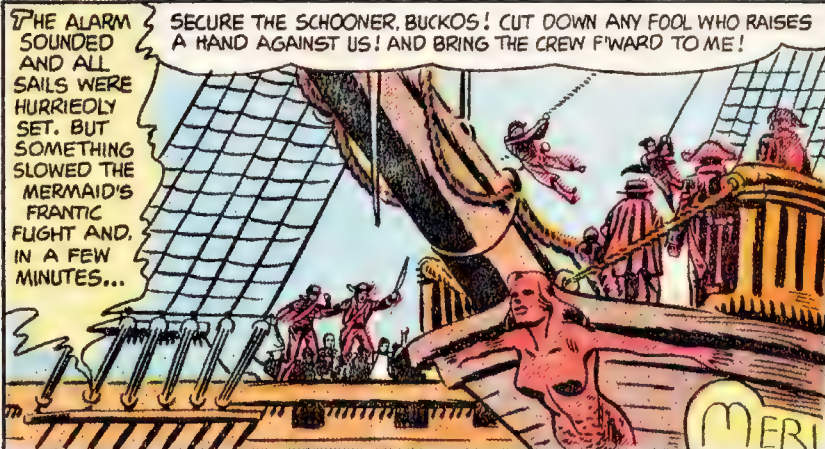
T-THIS ISN'T WHAT YOU PROMISED TO PAY, MR. GRIMM! YOU...YOU'RE CHEATING US OUT OF OUR RIGHTFUL WAGES!



JABEZ GRIMM'S STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE WASN'T NOTED FOR A WEEK. BY THAT TIME THE THREE WORKERS HAD GONE THEIR SEPARATE WAYS. SAM BRAY, CURIOUSLY, SIGNED ON AS SEAMAN ABOARD THE MERMAID. A MONTH LATER...

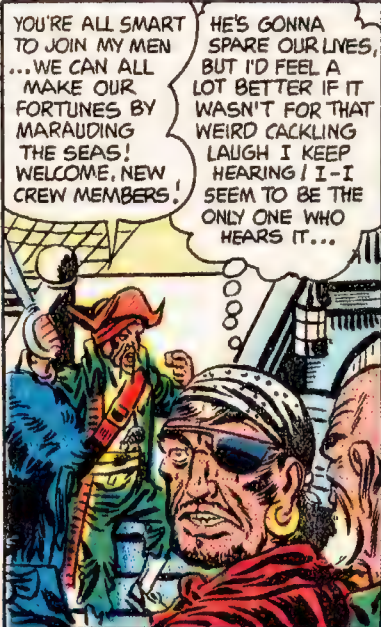


THE ALARM SOUNDED AND ALL SAILS WERE HURRIEDLY SET. BUT SOMETHING SLOWED THE MERMAID'S FRANTIC FLIGHT AND, IN A FEW MINUTES...



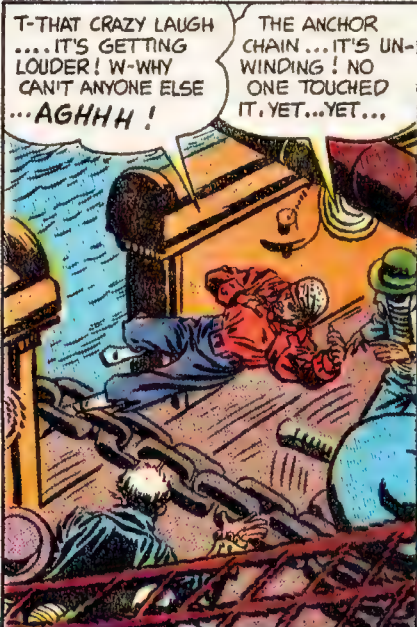
YOU'RE ALL SMART TO JOIN MY MEN ...WE CAN ALL MAKE OUR FORTUNES BY MARAUDING THE SEAS! WELCOME, NEW CREW MEMBERS!

HE'S GONNA SPARE OUR LIVES, BUT I'D FEEL A LOT BETTER IF IT WASN'T FOR THAT WEIRD CACKLING LAUGH I KEEP HEARING! I-I SEEM TO BE THE ONLY ONE WHO HEARS IT...



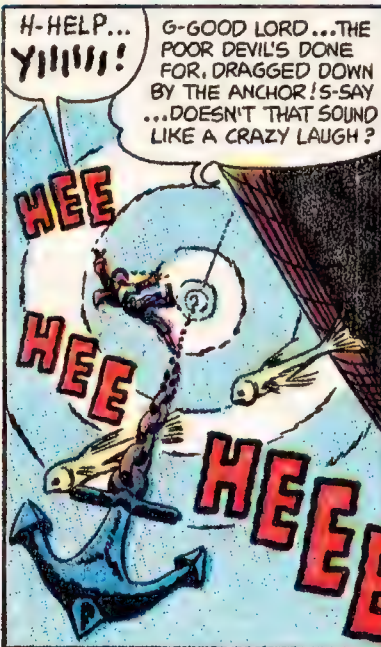
T-THAT CRAZY LAUGH ...IT'S GETTING LOUDER! W-WHY CAN'T ANYONE ELSE ...AGHHH!

THE ANCHOR CHAIN ...IT'S UNWINDING! NO ONE TOUCHED IT, YET...YET...



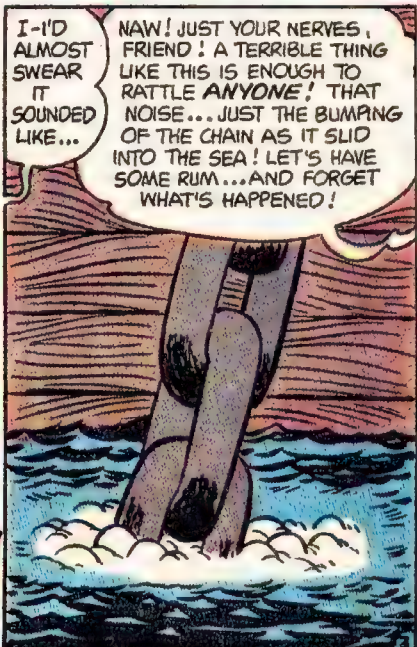
H-HELP... YIIII!

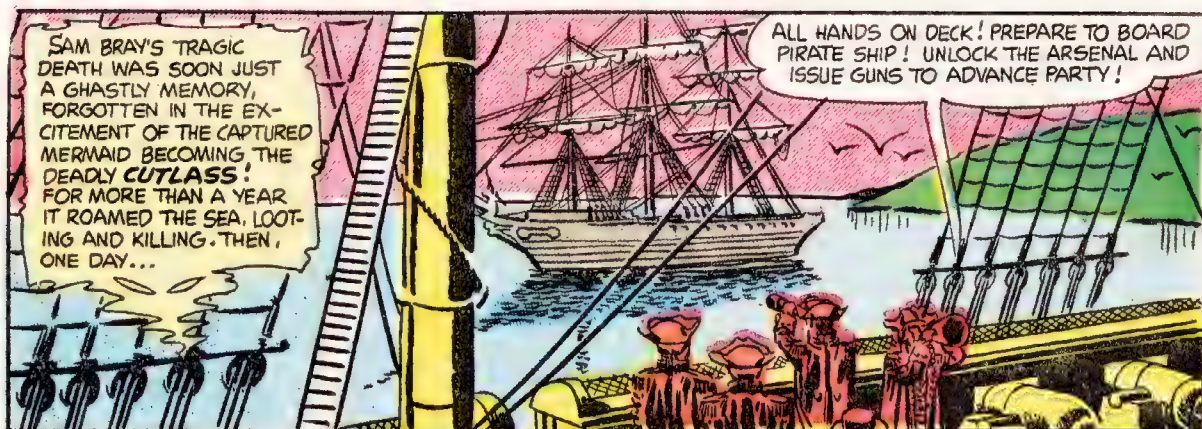
G-GOOD LORD...THE POOR DEVIL'S DONE FOR, DRAGGED DOWN BY THE ANCHOR! S-SAY ...DOESN'T THAT SOUND LIKE A CRAZY LAUGH?



I-I'D ALMOST SWEAR IT SOUNDED LIKE...

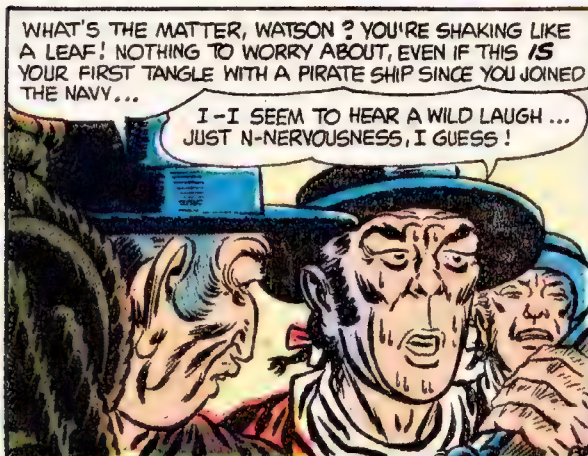
NAW! JUST YOUR NERVES, FRIEND! A TERRIBLE THING LIKE THIS IS ENOUGH TO RATTLE ANYONE! THAT NOISE... JUST THE BUMPING OF THE CHAIN AS IT SLID INTO THE SEA! LET'S HAVE SOME RUM...AND FORGET WHAT'S HAPPENED!





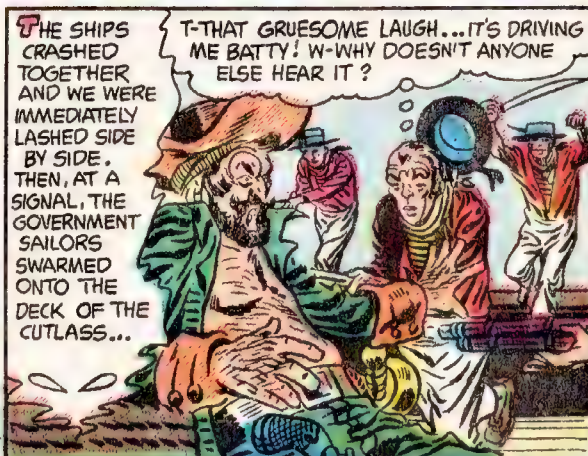
SAM BRAY'S TRAGIC DEATH WAS SOON JUST A GHASTLY MEMORY, FORGOTTEN IN THE EXCITEMENT OF THE CAPTURED MERMAID BECOMING THE DEADLY **CUTLASS**! FOR MORE THAN A YEAR IT ROAMED THE SEA, LOOTING AND KILLING. THEN, ONE DAY...

ALL HANDS ON DECK! PREPARE TO BOARD PIRATE SHIP! UNLOCK THE ARSENAL AND ISSUE GUNS TO ADVANCE PARTY!



WHAT'S THE MATTER, WATSON? YOU'RE SHAKING LIKE A LEAF! NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, EVEN IF THIS **IS** YOUR FIRST TANGLE WITH A PIRATE SHIP SINCE YOU JOINED THE NAVY...

I-I SEEM TO HEAR A WILD LAUGH... JUST N-NERVOUSNESS, I GUESS!



THE SHIPS CRASHED TOGETHER AND WE WERE IMMEDIATELY LASHED SIDE BY SIDE. THEN, AT A SIGNAL, THE GOVERNMENT SAILORS SWARMED ONTO THE DECK OF THE CUTLASS...

T-THAT GRUESOME LAUGH...IT'S DRIVING ME BATTY! W-WHY DOESN'T ANYONE ELSE HEAR IT?



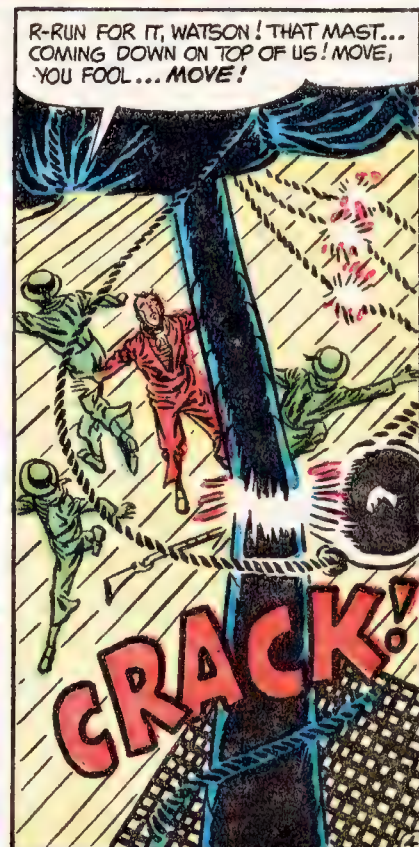
D-DON'T FIRE... WE SURRENDER! YOU'VE GOT US OUTNUMBERED...MOST OF THE CREW IS ASHORE AT SANTO DOMINIC! S-SPARE US...

T-THAT INSANE LAUGH...GROWING LOUDER AND LOUDER! FEELS AS IF IT'S GOING TO BURST MY SKULL IN ANOTHER MOMENT!

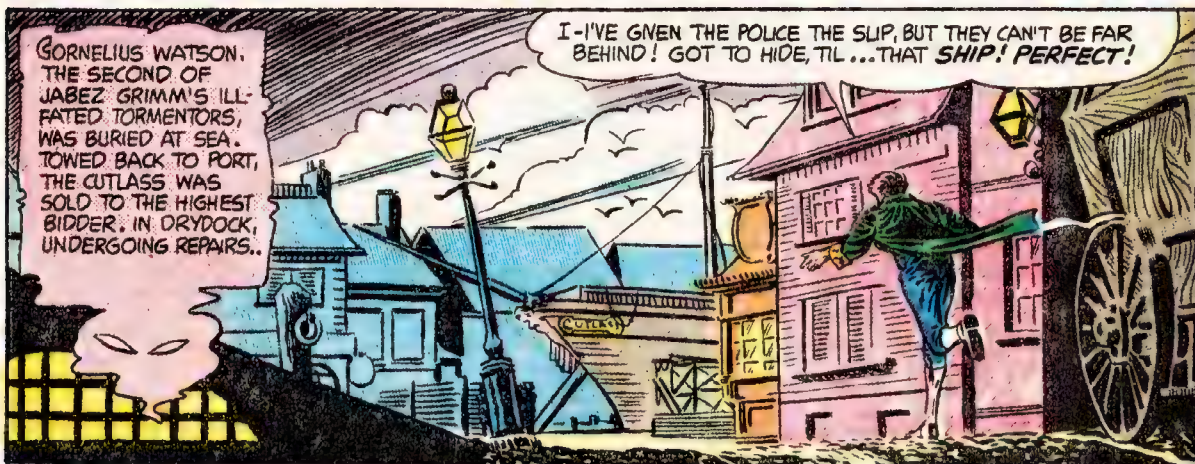
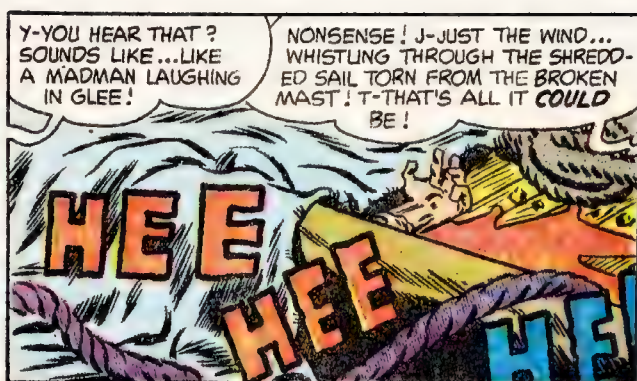
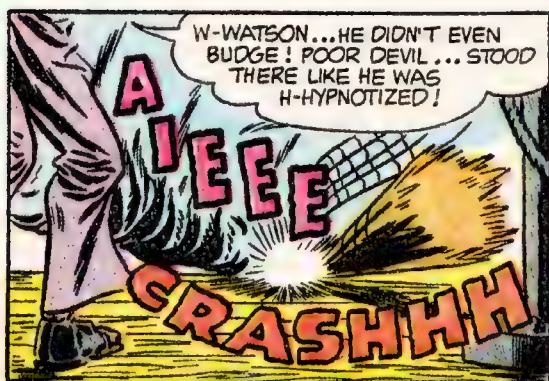


BEFORE A SHOT HAD BEEN FIRED, THE UNDERMANNED CUTLASS WAS SURRENDERED! THE SCOURGE OF THE SEA HAD BEEN CAPTURED BY THE NAVY WITHOUT A SINGLE DROP OF BLOOD BEING SPILLED!

I-I'M GOING CRAZY... CAN'T RID MYSELF OF THIS GHASTLY CACKLING IN MY BRAIN! S-SOUNDS ALMOST LIKE...LIKE...



R-RUN FOR IT, WATSON! THAT MAST... COMING DOWN ON TOP OF US! MOVE, YOU FOOL... MOVE!



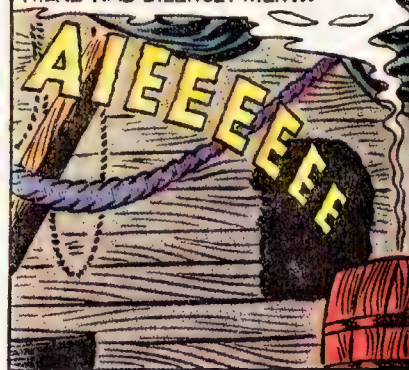
I-I-V'E GOT TO GET ABOARD, WHILE THE REPAIR CREW IS EATING! THERE MUST BE SOME CORNER OF THIS TUB I CAN DUCK INTO...THEN WHEN IT'S DARK I'LL RUN FOR IT! SO FAR, SO GOOD!



T-THIS OPENING...MAKE A WONDERFUL HIDING PLACE! F-FUNNY...I SEEM TO HEAR A QUEER LAUGHING SOUND! IT'S ALMOST LIKE...NAW! HE MUST BE A ROTTING SKELETON BY NOW!



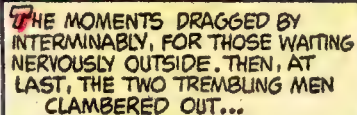
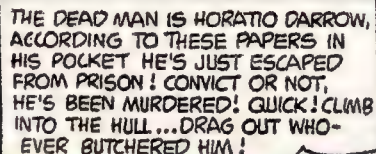
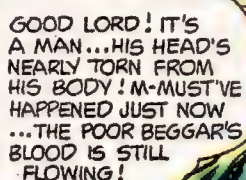
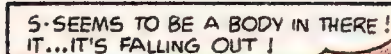
UNTO THE DARK OPENING THE FUGITIVE SLID STEALTHILY. FOR A MOMENT THERE WAS SILENCE. THEN...



W-WHAT WAS THAT? A S-SCREAM OF AGONY... FROM SOME PLACE IN THE KEEL! LOOK...THAT ROTTED OPENING...IN THERE!



THE SCREAMING
STOPPED...M-MEBBE
WE'RE TOO LATE!
QUICK...HACK AWAY
AT THE REST OF THE
HULL TIMBERS!



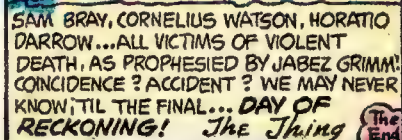
A-ALL I COULD
FIND IS THIS STINKING
PILE OF OLD CLOTHES...
MUST'VE BEEN ROTTING
DOWN THERE FOR A YEAR!

AND ALONGSIDE IT...A
LENGTH OF DECAYING ROPE,
AND A SAILMAKER'S NEEDLE
AND THREAD! **NOTHING
ELSE!**



8-BUT WE
SEARCHED IT
THOROUGHLY,
INCH BY
INCH! THERE
WASN'T A
SIGN OF
ANYONE...
ANYONE
WE COULD
S-SEE,
THAT
IS!

T-THAT
UNEARTHLY
LAUGH...IT'S
COMING
FROM...
FROM
THERE!



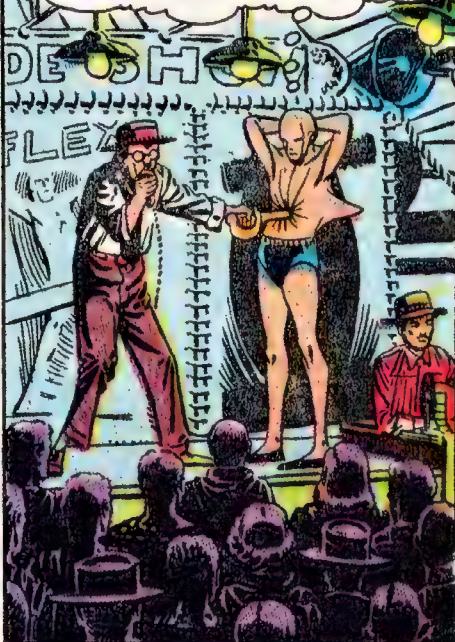
The Thing presents **COMEBACK!**

REMEMBER FLEXO, THE GROTESQUE LITTLE MAN WHOSE ENTIRE BODY WAS COMPOSED OF SOMETHING STRANGELY LIKE **RUBBER**? IF YOU FREQUENT TOURING CARNIVALS AND FREAK SHOWS YOU'VE GAWKED AT HIM ...UNTIL QUITE RECENTLY HE EXCITED THE INTEREST OF MILLIONS OF MORBIDLY CURIOUS PEOPLE. EVER WONDERED WHAT HAPPENED TO THIS WEIRD CREATURE...WHAT POWER LURED HIM AWAY FROM THE WORLD OF SIDESHOWS? WELL...HEE HEE...HERE'S A HOT LITTLE YARN TO MELT YOUR HEART...

G-GOOD LORD...SHE MUST HAVE THOUSANDS IN GEMS IN THERE! ENOUGH TO GET ME OUT OF THIS LIFE... AWAY FROM THESE PRYING EYES AND IDIOTIC RUBES WHO THINK ME A FREAK! B-BUT THOSE SNAKES OF HERS...BRRR!

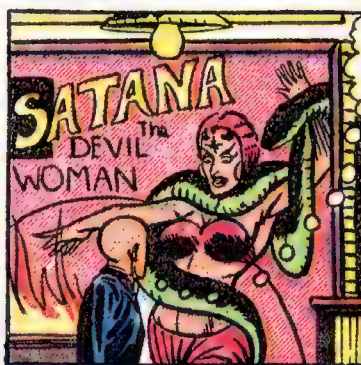
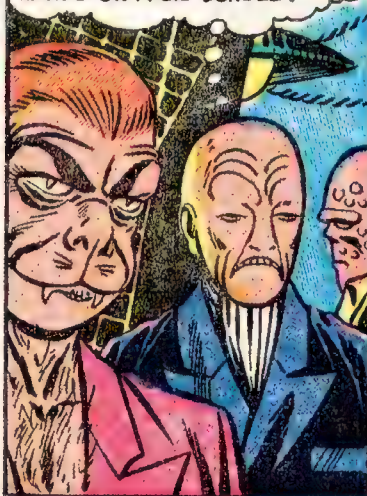
FLEXO WAS ONE OF THE BIGGEST ATTRACTIONS IN THE LAND...WHEREVER HE APPEARED THOUSANDS CAME TO LOOK AND WONDER! BUT FLEXO WAS SAD, FOR HIS LIFE WAS NOT COMPLETE...

MONEY...THAT'S WHAT I NEED! IF ONLY I COULD GET MY HANDS ON ENOUGH DOUGH TO RETIRE...!



BUT NO MATTER HOW MUCH HE BROODED OVER HIS PLIGHT, FLEXO NEVER SEEMED ABLE TO SAVE ENOUGH TO ESCAPE FROM THE TWILIGHT WORLD OF CARNIVALS...

FREAKS...MISFITS...MONSTERS! THAT'S ALL I'M EVER SURROUNDED BY! MONEY COULD BUY MY FREEDOM...IF ONLY I COULD GET MY HANDS ON A BIG BUNDLE!



I'M SICK AND TIRED OF BEING LOOKED AT AS IF I WAS...WHAT'S **THIS**? SATANA...MUST BE SOMEONE NEW TO THE SHOW! WONDER WHAT'S WRONG WITH **HER**?

WONDER WHAT HER TRICK IS! BAH! THEY'RE ALL FRAUDS HERE...ALL EXCEPT **ME**! AND JUST BECAUSE I'M DIFFERENT THAN OTHER MEN, I'M CONSIDERED A FREAK LIKE THESE PHONIES!

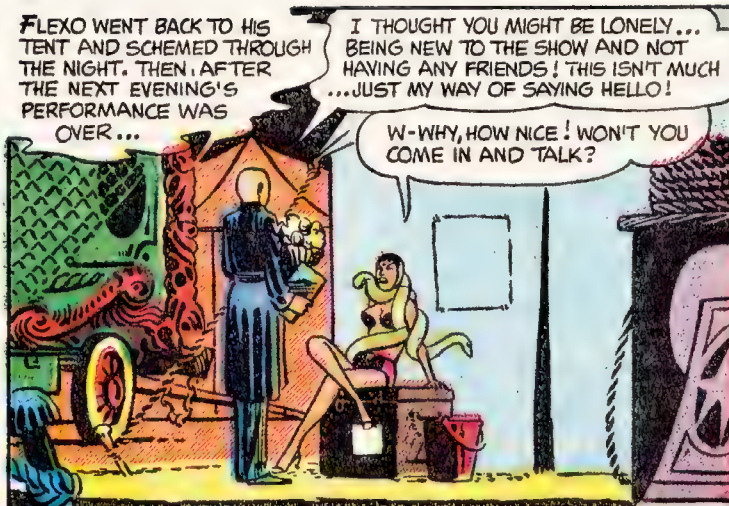
S-SHE JUST GLARES WITH HER EYES... AND FIRE COMES OUTTA THAT EMPTY JAR! WOW!





FOR YEARS FLEXPLO HAD SEETHED WITH BITTERNESS AND FRUSTRATION. THEN, SUDDENLY, THAT SAME NIGHT HE FIRST SAW SATANA...

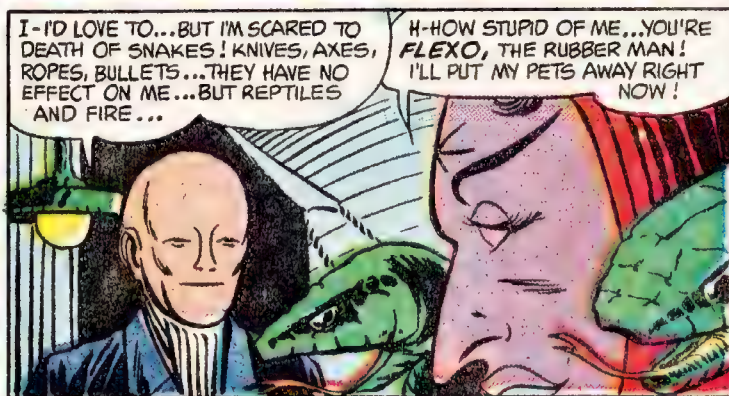
M-MUST BE A FORTUNE IN JEWELRY IN THAT CHEST! ENOUGH OF A STAKE FOR ME TO START A NEW LIFE! I'D LIKE TO BUST IN AND...BUT THOSE SNAKES OF HERS...! THERE MUST BE A WAY!



FLEXPLO WENT BACK TO HIS TENT AND SCHEMED THROUGH THE NIGHT. THEN, AFTER THE NEXT EVENING'S PERFORMANCE WAS OVER...

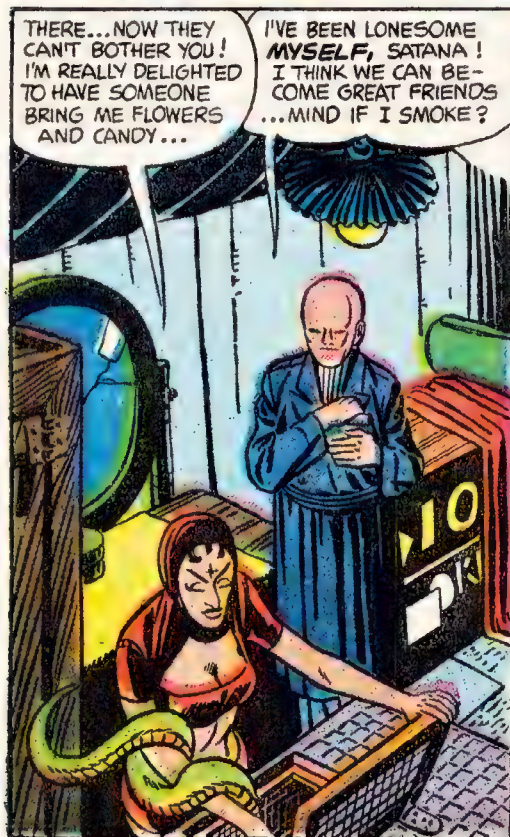
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE LONELY... BEING NEW TO THE SHOW AND NOT HAVING ANY FRIENDS! THIS ISN'T MUCH...JUST MY WAY OF SAYING HELLO!

W-WHY, HOW NICE! WON'T YOU COME IN AND TALK?



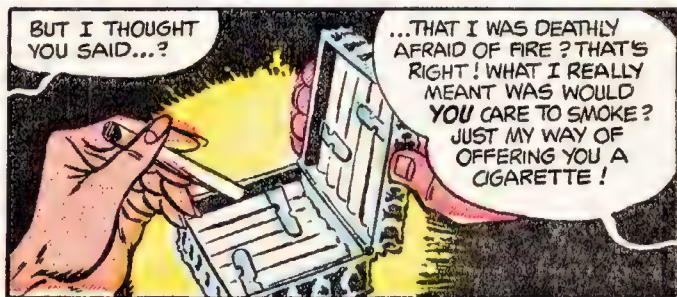
I-I'D LOVE TO...BUT I'M SCARED TO DEATH OF SNAKES! KNIVES, AXES, ROPES, BULLETS...THEY HAVE NO EFFECT ON ME...BUT REPTILES AND FIRE...

H-HOW STUPID OF ME...YOU'RE FLEXPLO, THE RUBBER MAN! I'LL PUT MY PETS AWAY RIGHT NOW!



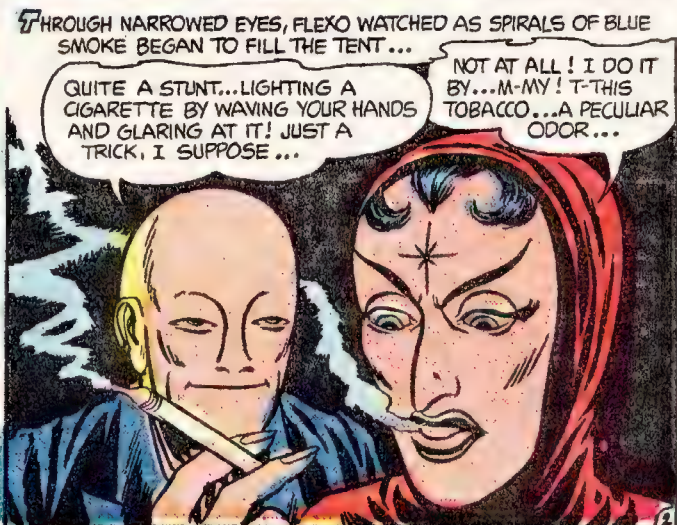
THERE...NOW THEY CAN'T BOTHER YOU! I'M REALLY DELIGHTED TO HAVE SOMEONE BRING ME FLOWERS AND CANDY...

I'VE BEEN LONESOME MYSELF, SATANA! I THINK WE CAN BECOME GREAT FRIENDS...MIND IF I SMOKE?



BUT I THOUGHT YOU SAID...?

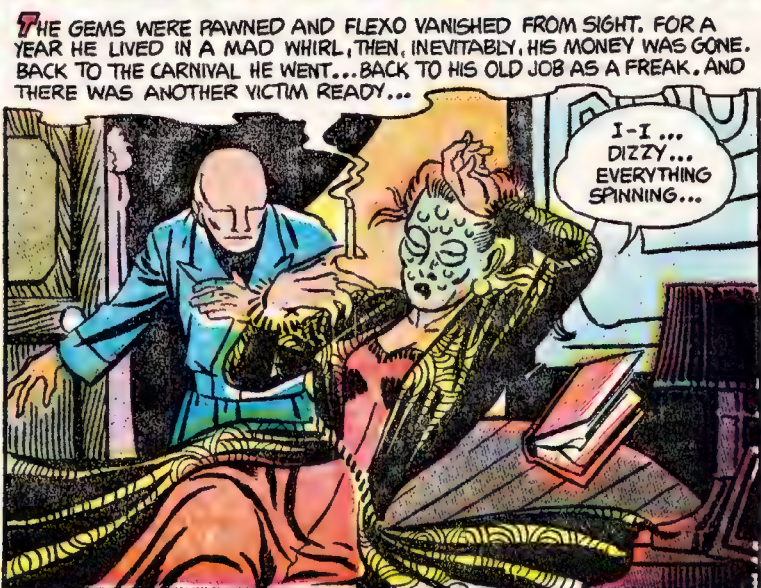
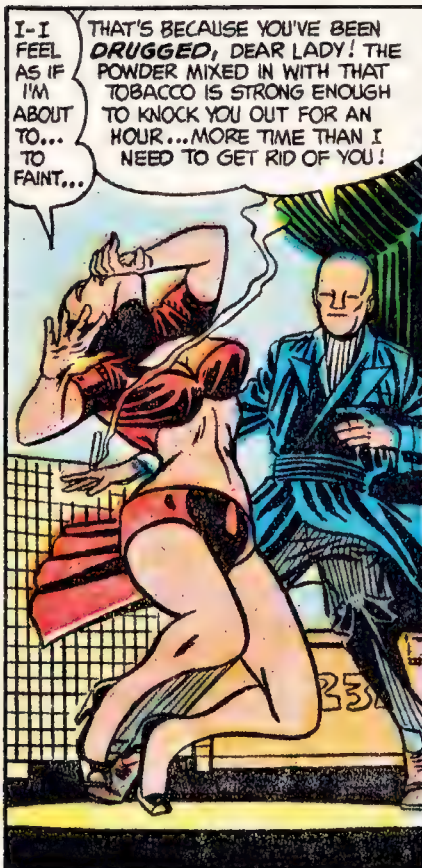
...THAT I WAS DEATHLY AFRAID OF FIRE? THAT'S RIGHT! WHAT I REALLY MEANT WAS WOULD YOU CARE TO SMOKE? JUST MY WAY OF OFFERING YOU A CIGARETTE!



THROUGH NARROWED EYES, FLEXPLO WATCHED AS SPIRALS OF BLUE SMOKE BEGAN TO FILL THE TENT...

QUITE A STUNT...LIGHTING A CIGARETTE BY WAVING YOUR HANDS AND GLARING AT IT! JUST A TRICK, I SUPPOSE...

NOT AT ALL! I DO IT BY...M-MY! T-THIS TOBACCO...A PECULIAR ODOR...



THIS IS ALMOST TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE...ALMOST AN EXACT DUPLICATE OF WHAT HAPPENED ONCE BEFORE! A GAL WITH MONEY...THE DRUGGED CIGARETTE...THE CARNY PLAYING THE SAME TOWN...THE BODY DUMPED INTO THE SAME QUARRY!



G-GOT TO CATCH MY BREATH ... THIS GOON IS HEAVIER THAN THE OTHER ONE! I'LL PUSH HER OVER THE SIDE, RUN BACK TO CAMP AND PRY OPEN THAT MONEY BOX OF HERS, THEN ...



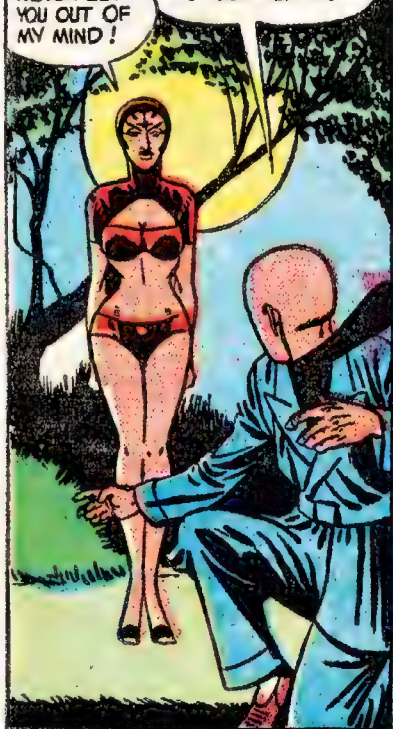
YOU'VE RETURNED, FLEXO...COME BACK TO THIS FATEFUL PLACE SO THAT I CAN HAVE MY AWFUL VENGEANCE!

W-WHO...? I...I'VE BEEN FOLLOWED!

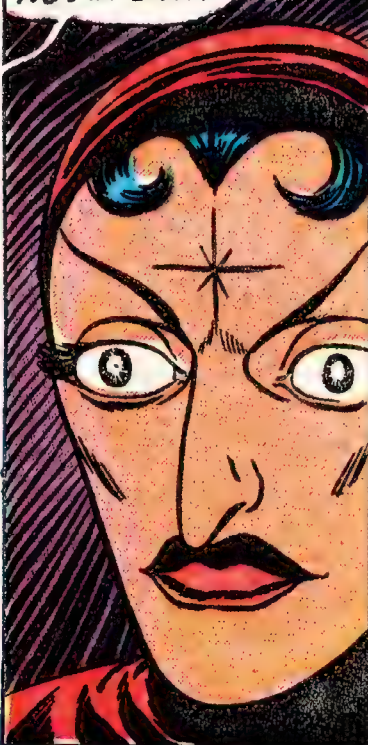


EVER SINCE THAT GHASTLY DAY YOU'VE BEEN FOLLOWED, FLEXO... I NEVER LET YOU OUT OF MY MIND!

G-GOOD GOD! IT CAN'T BE...SATANA! B-BUT...YOU DIED... WITH MY OWN EYES I SAW YOU PLUNGE TO YOUR DEATH!



S-SOMEHOW YOU MANAGED TO SURVIVE...BUT THIS TIME I'LL FINISH THE JOB WITH MY BARE HANDS! YOU WON'T ESCAPE...N-NO... NO! MY SKIN!



I-I'M ON FIRE...BURNING UP! G-GOT TO RUN...GET AWAY... GOT TO...

AIEEEEE!



HERE WAS A GHASTLY
SIZZLING SOUND, UP THERE
ON THE EDGE OF THE
ABANDONED QUARRY...
AND THE ACRID SMELL
OF BURNING RUBBER.
THEN, SUDDENLY,
THE FROG-FACED
GIRL STIRRED ...

W- WHAT HAPPENED ? I..I
MUST HAVE
FAINTED...

HERE WAS A GHASTLY
SIZZLING SOUND, UP THERE
ON THE EDGE OF THE
ABANDONED QUARRY...
AND THE ACRID SMELL
OF BURNING RUBBER.
THEN, SUDDENLY,
THE FROG-FACED
GIRL STIRRED ...

W- WHAT HAPPENED ? I..I
MUST HAVE
FAINTED...

ONE LOOK AT THE JAGGED QUARRY BELOW WAS ENOUGH TO JOLT THE GIRL BACK TO REALITY. A SCREECH PIERCED THE NIGHT SILENCE, AND MEN CAME RUNNING...

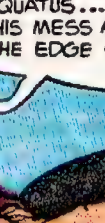
T-THAT NEW
PERFORMER..
THE RUBBER
MAN.... HE
MUST'VE
DRUGGED THE
CIGARETTE
HE GAVE ME!
NEXT THING I
KNEW I WAS
HERE...

EITHER YOU'VE
HAD A TERRIBLE
NIGHTMARE, AND
IT'S ALL A DREAM
...OR HE PLANNED
TO THROW YOU
DOWN INTO THE
ROCKS!

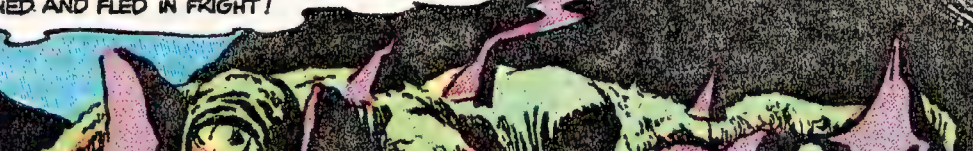
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HERE...

EITHER YOU'VE
HAD A TERRIBLE
NIGHTMARE, AND
IT'S ALL A DREAM
...OR HE PLANNED
TO THROW YOU
DOWN INTO THE
ROCKS!

THIS STUFF... FEELS GUMMY,
LIKE MELTED WAX! MEBBE
SOMEONE *DID* PLAN TO KILL
AQUATUS... ONLY HE SLID ON
THIS MESS AND FELL OVER
THE EDGE HIMSELF!

A close-up illustration of a hand holding a fork with spaghetti. The spaghetti is dripping with a thick, yellow, gummy substance. The background is dark and textured.

THE FRIGHTENED ONLOOKERS PEERED INTO THE QUARRY,
THEN TURNED AND FLED IN FRIGHT!

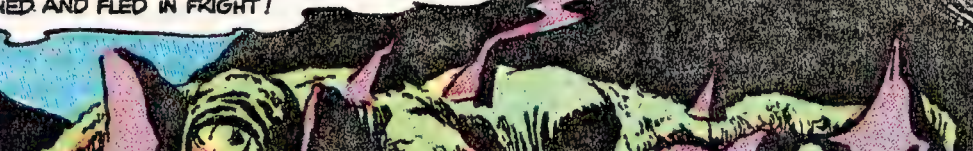


DOWN BELOW, ON THE
MURDEROUS ROCKS WHERE
IT HAD PLUNGED A YEAR BEFORE,
SPRAWLED THE HALF-ROTTED CORPSE
OF SATANA, THE DEVIL WOMAN!

*The
Thing*

*The
End*

THE FRIGHTENED ONLOOKERS PEERED INTO THE QUARRY,
THEN TURNED AND FLED IN FRIGHT!

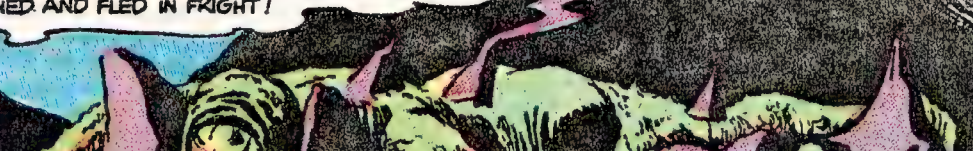


DOWN BELOW, ON THE
MURDEROUS ROCKS WHERE
IT HAD PLUNGED A YEAR BEFORE,
SPRAWLED THE HALF-ROTTED CORPSE
OF SATANA, THE DEVIL WOMAN!

The Thing

The End

THE FRIGHTENED ONLOOKERS PEERED INTO THE QUARRY,
THEN TURNED AND FLED IN FRIGHT!



DOWN BELOW, ON THE
MURDEROUS ROCKS WHERE
IT HAD PLUNGED A YEAR BEFORE,
SPRAWLED THE HALF-ROTTED CORPSE
OF SATANA, THE DEVIL WOMAN!

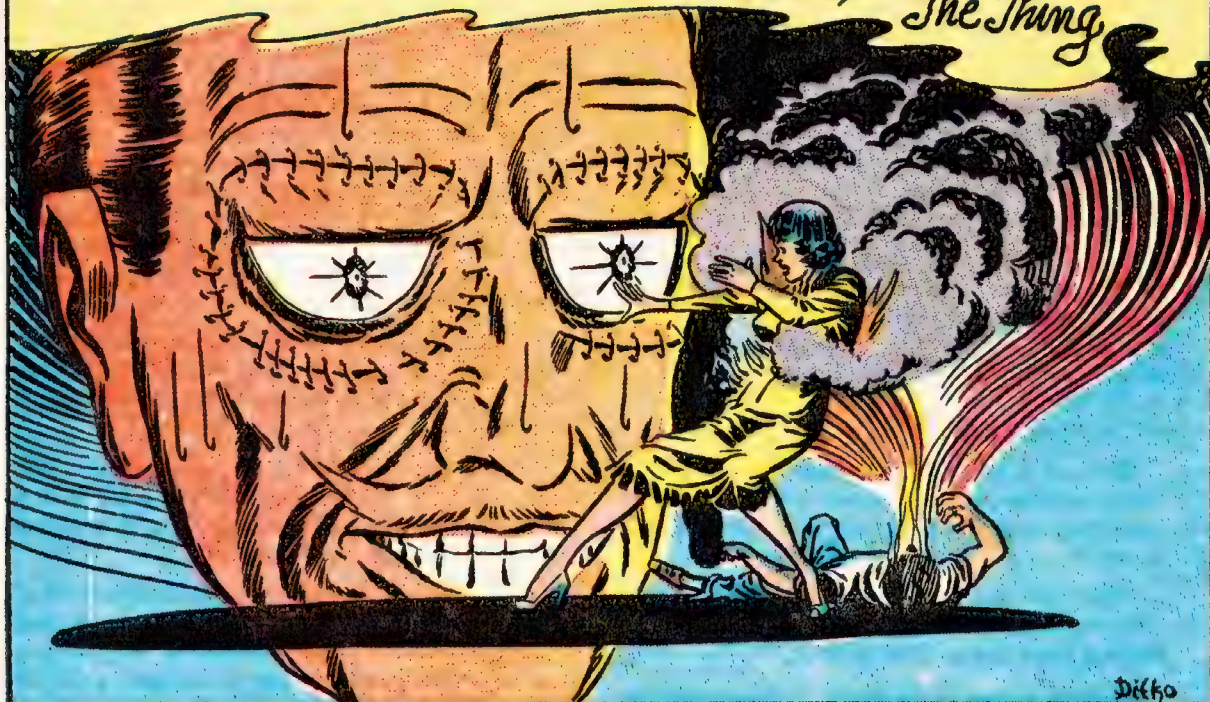
The Thing

The End

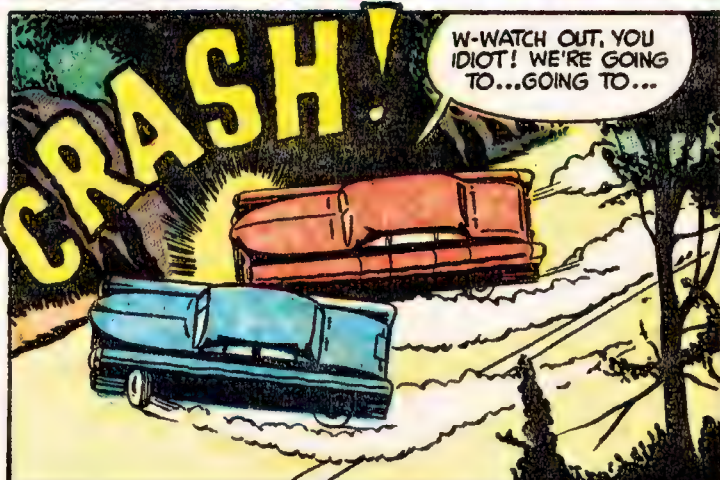
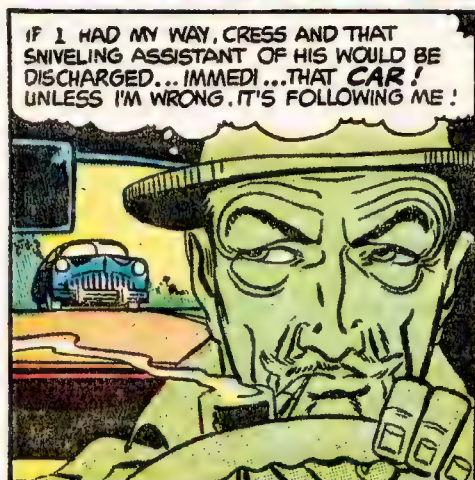
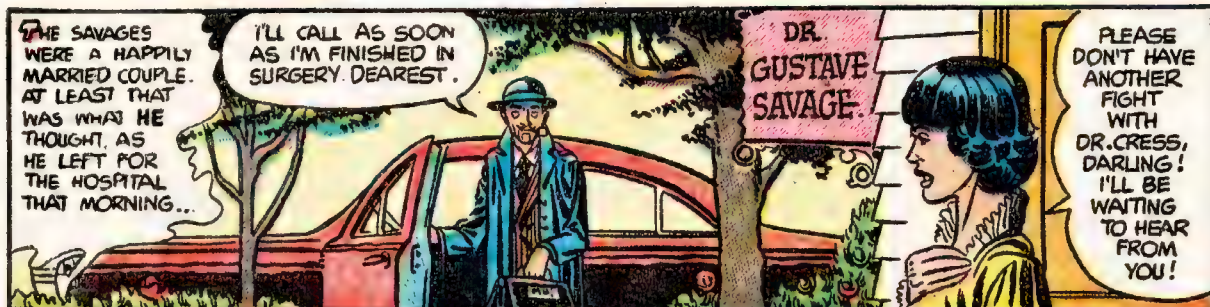
EVER BEEN DRIVEN BLIND WITH FURY...SO INSANELY BLIND THAT YOU PRAYED FOR THE CHANCE TO **MURDER**? IF NOT, THIS GRUESOME TALE SHOULD PROVE BOTH DIVERTING AND EDUCATIONAL, FOR IT OUTLINES WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN TO **YOU**...

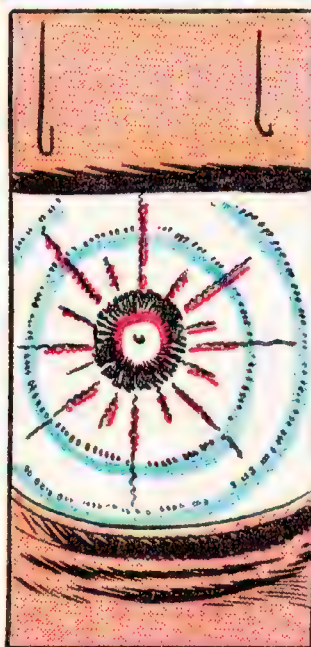
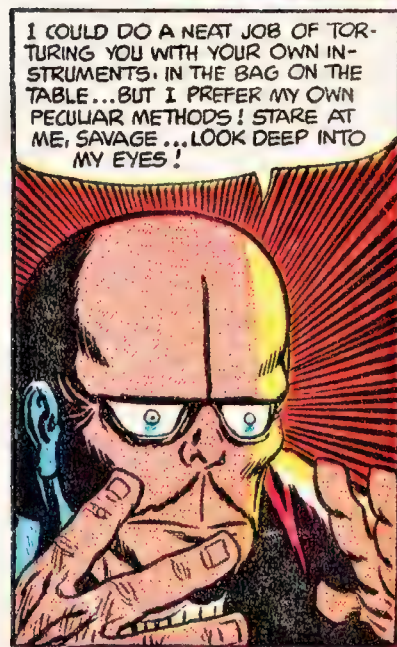
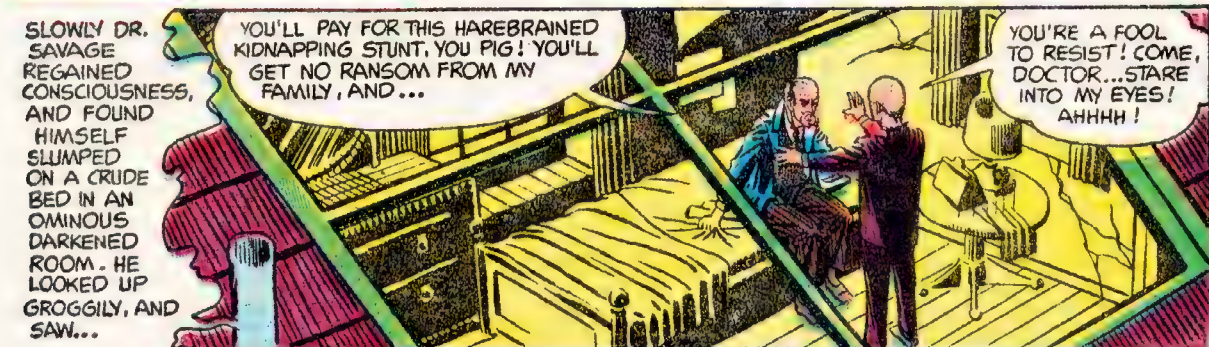
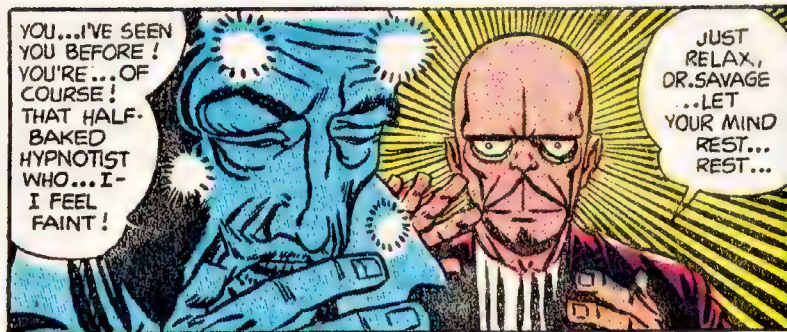
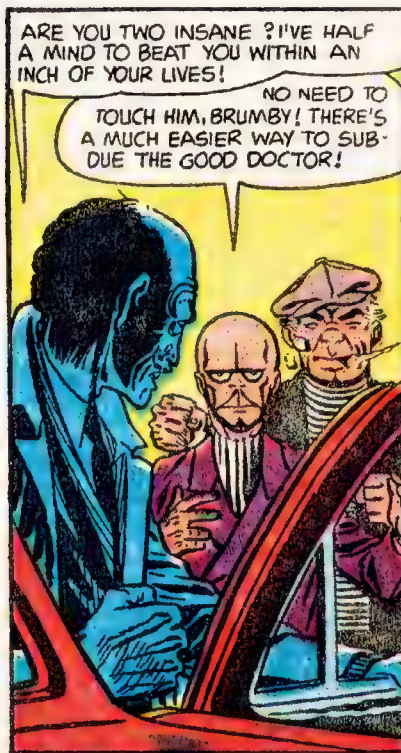
IF LOOKS COULD KILL!

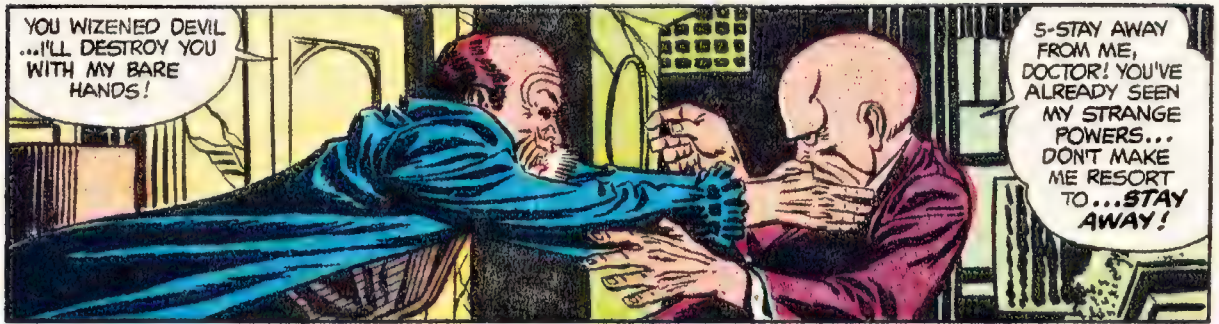
AS TOLD BY *The Thing*



Dicko







YOU WIZENED DEVIL...I'LL DESTROY YOU WITH MY BARE HANDS!

5-STAY AWAY FROM ME, DOCTOR! YOU'VE ALREADY SEEN MY STRANGE POWERS... DON'T MAKE ME RESORT TO...**STAY AWAY!**

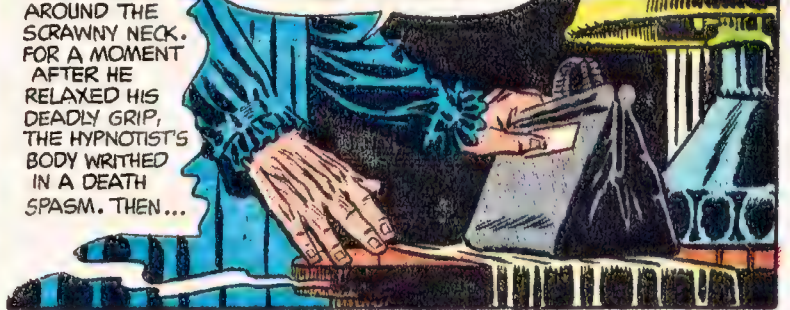


I- I'LL MAKE A DEAL WITH Y-YOU.... RELEASE YOU IF...**ANGHH!**

YOU **BLINDED** ME, YOU LOUSY MONSTER! NOW YOU'LL DIE... **DIE!**

THE SURGEON'S STRONG HANDS TIGHTENED RELENTLESSLY AROUND THE SCRAWNY NECK. FOR A MOMENT AFTER HE RELAXED HIS DEADLY GRIP, THE HYPNOTIST'S BODY WRITHED IN A DEATH SPASM. THEN...

SOMEHOW HE TOOK MY EYESIGHT...SO I ROBBED HIM OF LIFE! THERE'S ONE MORE THING I WANT... I-I MUST HURRY! MY SCALPEL...I NEED A **CUTTING** INSTRUMENT!

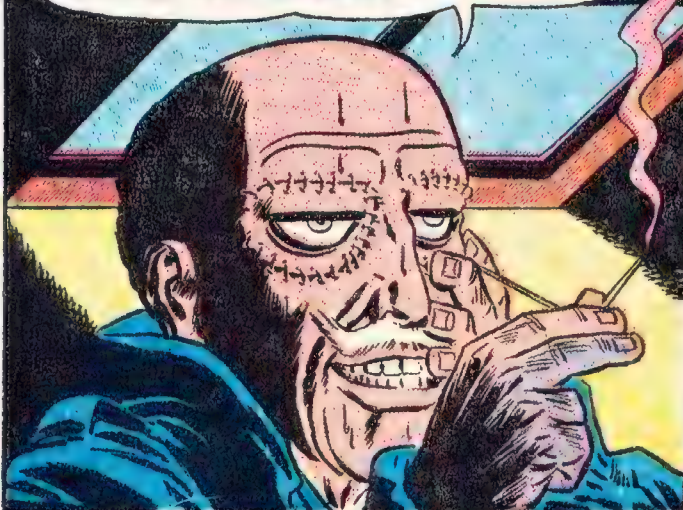


AN EYE FOR AN EYE, THEY SAY... HIS FOR **MINE!** THE NERVES ARE STILL ALIVE... NO TIME TO LOSE! I'VE NEVER WORKED **BLIND** BEFORE, BUT IT'S MY ONLY CHANCE!

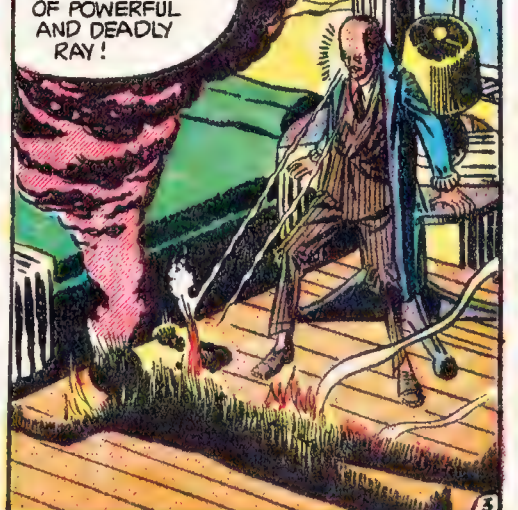


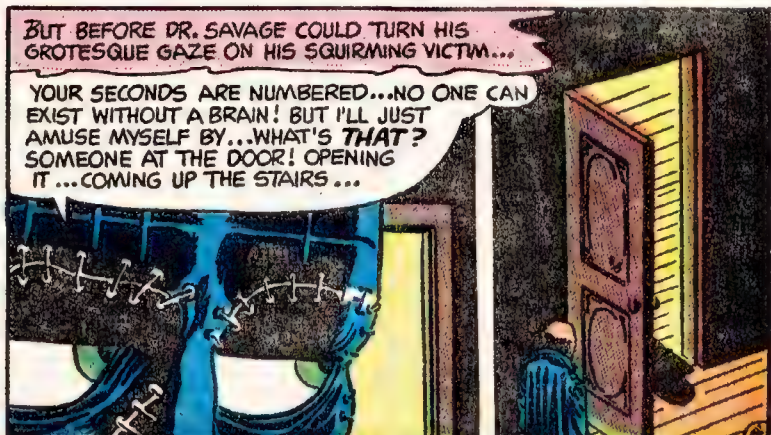
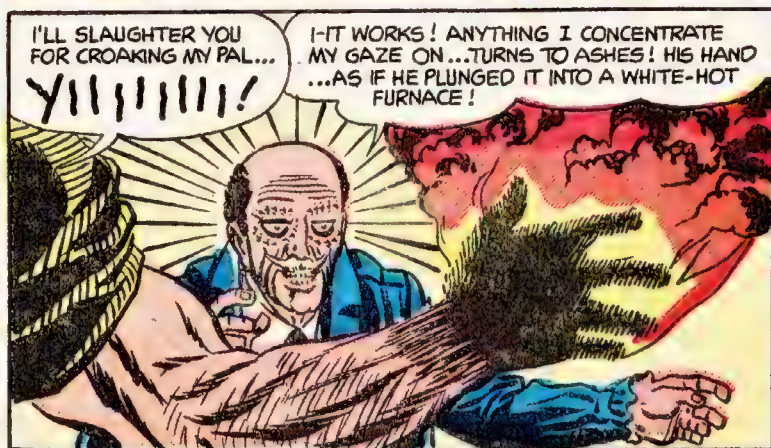
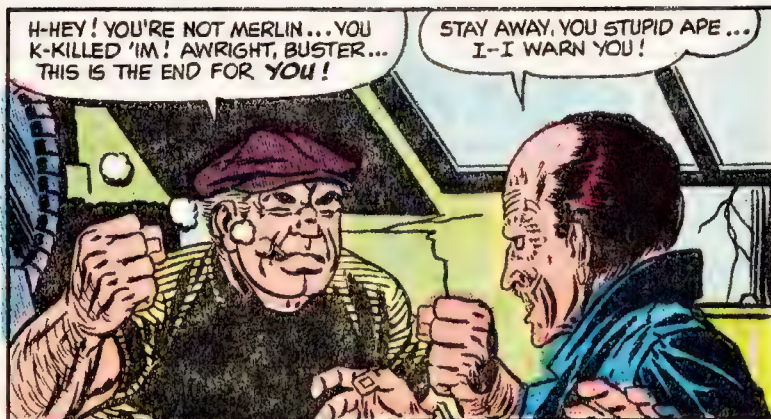
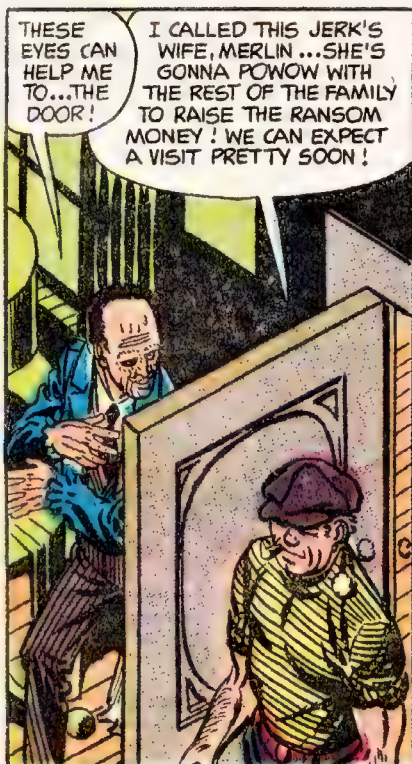
WITH FINGERS SKILLED BY COUNTLESS DANGEROUS OPERATIONS, THE SURGEON GHOULISHLY TRANSPLANTS THE DEAD HYPNOTIST'S EYES INTO HIS OWN...

AND...AND I CAN **SEE!** ONE OF HIS EYES IN PLACE AND...THE OTHER ONE...ALMOST STITCHED TIGHT...**THERE!**

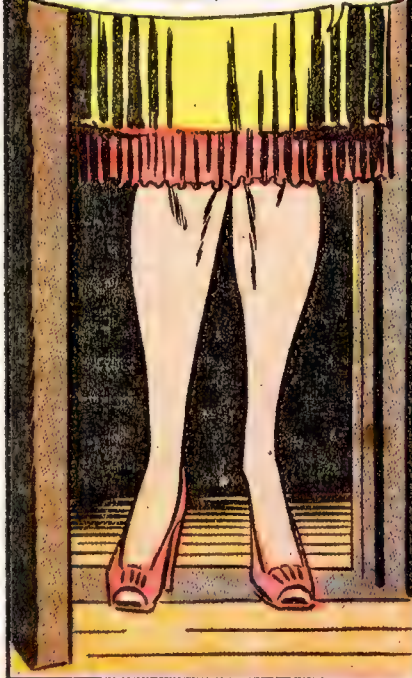


I DON'T KNOW THE SOURCE OF THE STRANGE POWER THAT DEVIL POSSESSED, BUT...**GOOD LORD!** THESE EYES...THEY CAN TURN ANYTHING IN THEIR PATH TO **CINDERS!** LIKE SOME KIND OF POWERFUL AND DEADLY RAY!





MERLIN...BRUMBY...WHERE ARE YOU? EVERYTHING'S SET FOR THE BIG CLEAN-UP! IN ANOTHER HOUR WE'LL HAVE THE CASH! THEN WE CAN ALL MAKE TRACKS! THEY WON'T FIND THE BODY FOR WEEKS...BY THAT TIME WE'LL BE THOUSANDS OF MILES FROM HERE!



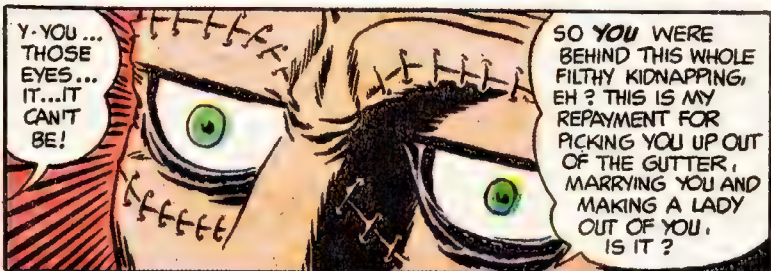
HIS FAMILY'LL NEVER KNOW THAT THE BIG JERK'S OWN WIFE WAS THE ONE WHO PUT THE FINGER ON HIM! THIS'LL TEACH HIM TO BE SO STINGY WITH HIS FORTUNE...**G-GUSTAVE!** HOW...HOW DID YOU...?

YOUR PRETTY SPEECH WAS EXTREMELY REVEALING, MY DEAREST!



Y-YOU... THOSE EYES... IT...IT CAN'T BE!

SO YOU WERE BEHIND THIS WHOLE FILTHY KIDNAPPING, EH? THIS IS MY REPAYMENT FOR PICKING YOU UP OUT OF THE GUTTER, MARRYING YOU AND MAKING A LADY OUT OF YOU. IS IT?



P-PLEASE, GUSTAVE... HAVE MERCY! DON'T...

YOU WERE HEARTLESS ENOUGH TO BETRAY YOUR OWN HUSBAND TO THESE DEPRAVED CRIMINALS...NOW YOU SHALL BE TRULY HEARTLESS!



DIE, YOU WORTHLESS. TREACHEROUS WORM...**DIE!**

AAIEEE

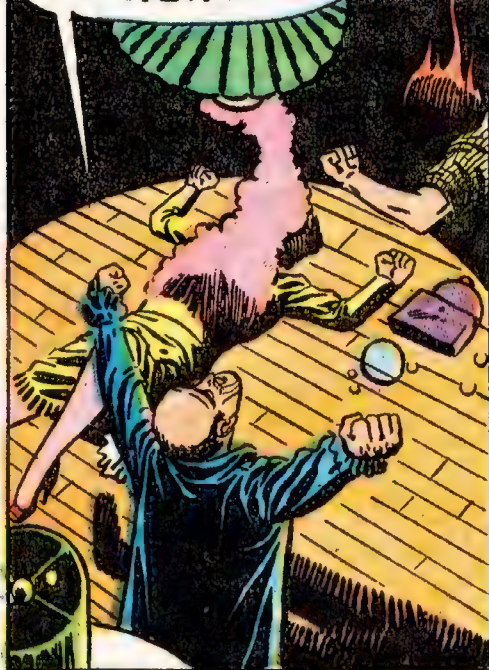


NO ONE HAS EVER POSSESSED SUCH ENORMOUS POWER AS I HAVE AT THIS MOMENT! **HEH, HEH, HEH!** I'M FREE TO EXACT VENGEANCE ON THE FOOLS WHO HAVE CROSSED ME...DR. CRESS WILL BE NEXT! **HEH, HEEEEEEE!**

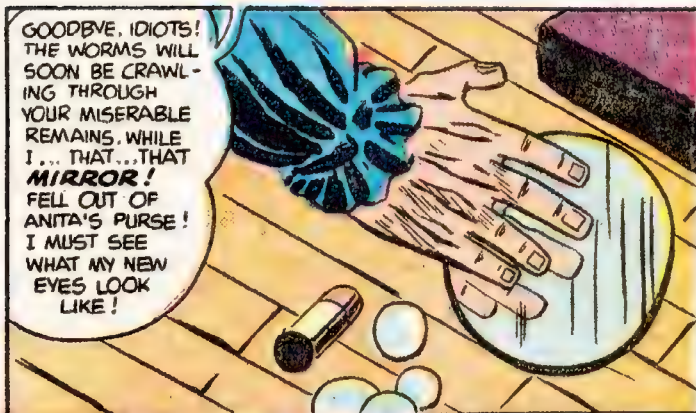


THAT INSULTING YOUNG MEDICAL ASSISTANT MUST GO...AND THE HOSPITAL SUPERINTENDENT! EVERYONE I'VE EVER FOUND ANNOYING WILL BE BURNT TO ASHES...THEY'LL SOON LEARN WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HATED BY DR. GUSTAVE SAVAGE! **HEH! HEH!**

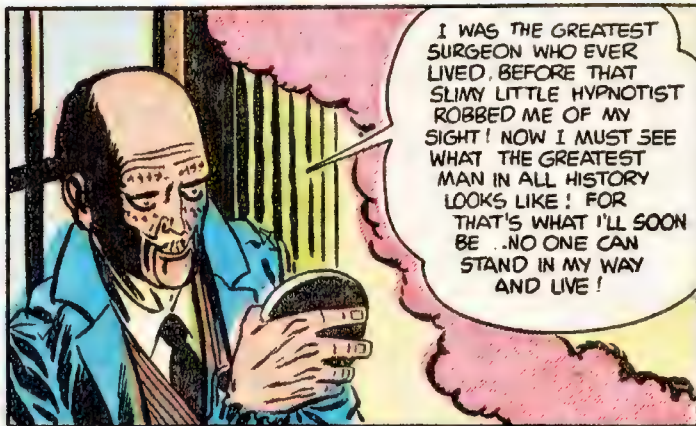
HEH!



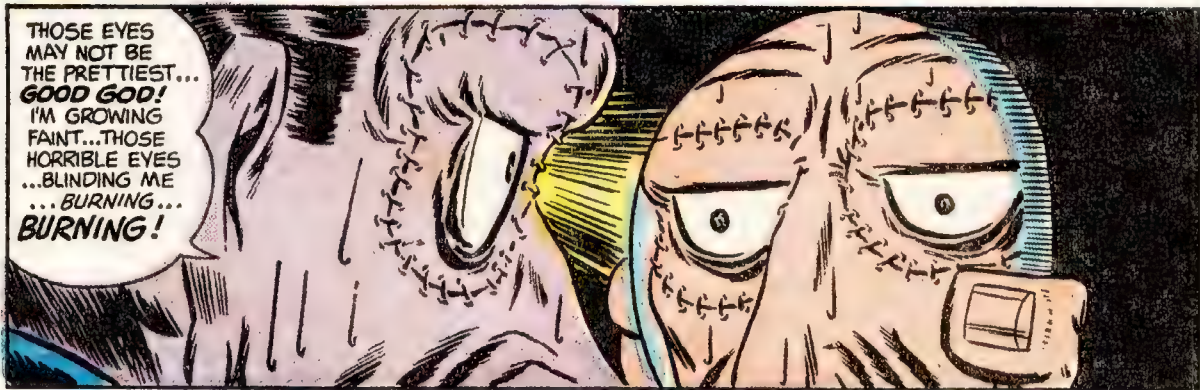
GOODBYE, IDIOTS! THE WORMS WILL SOON BE CRAWLING THROUGH YOUR MISERABLE REMAINS. WHILE I... THAT...THAT **MIRROR!** FELL OUT OF ANITA'S PURSE! I MUST SEE WHAT MY NEW EYES LOOK LIKE!



I WAS THE GREATEST SURGEON WHO EVER LIVED, BEFORE THAT SLIMY LITTLE HYPNOTIST ROBBED ME OF MY SIGHT! NOW I MUST SEE WHAT THE GREATEST MAN IN ALL HISTORY LOOKS LIKE! FOR THAT'S WHAT I'LL SOON BE...NO ONE CAN STAND IN MY WAY AND LIVE!

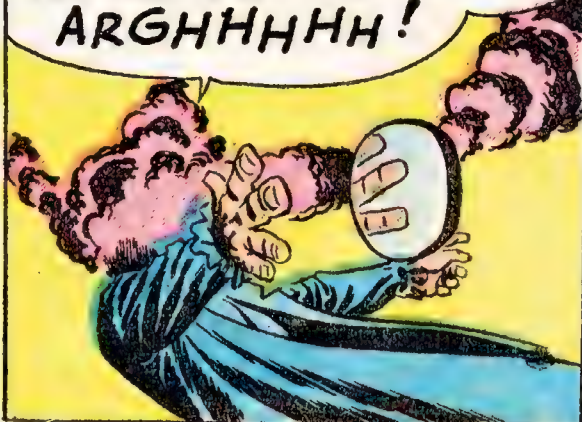


THOSE EYES MAY NOT BE THE PRETTIEST... **GOOD GOD!** I'M GROWING FAINT...THOSE HORRIBLE EYES...BLINDING ME...**BURNING... BURNING!**

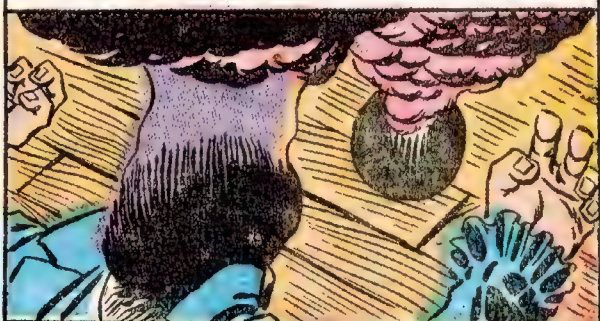


N-NO...**NO!** THAT DAZZLING, BLINDING RADIANCE... THAT AGONIZING HEAT...LIKE A WHITE-HOT BLOW-TORCH TURNED ON ME! I...I...

ARGHHHHH!



A SHRIEK OF AGONY BURST FROM DR. GUSTAVE SAVAGE'S SEARED LIPS, AS HE SAGGED LIFELESSLY TO THE FLOOR. A MOMENT LATER, THE MIRROR VANISHED...IN AN EERIE PUFF OF DEADLY SMOKE!



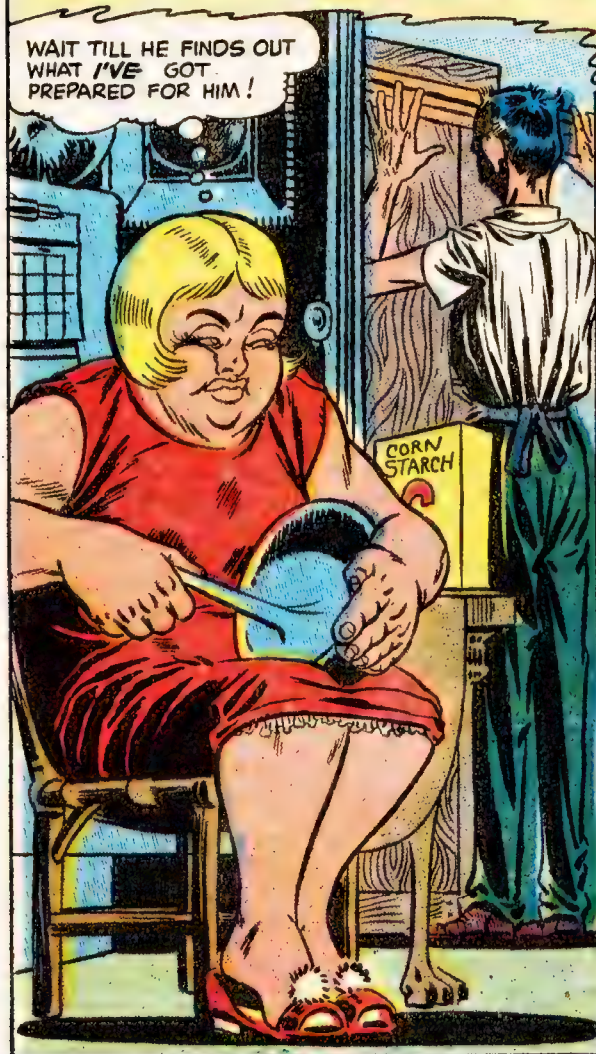
A LITTLE HARD TO BELIEVE, YOU SAY? **AYE!** BUT... **HEE HEE HEE!**...YOU'VE SEEN IT HAPPEN WITH YOUR OWN YOU-KNOW-WHAT, HAVEN'T YOU?

The End

THIS IS THE STORY OF A MAN AND A WIFE WHO LOVED EACH OTHER TO DEATH! FIRST THEY BEGAN BY TAKING OUT INSURANCE ON EACH OTHER, THEN THEY BOTH GOT NIGHTMARES. AND FINALLY--WELL ... READ ON--- AND YOU'LL SEE THIS LITTLE ...

FAMILY MIXUP

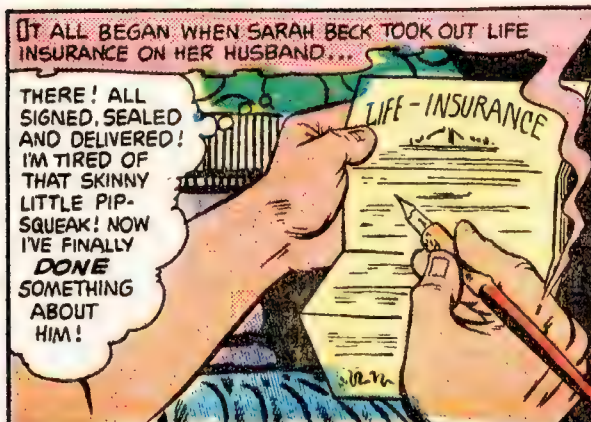
AS TOLD BY *The Thing*



WAIT TILL HE FINDS OUT WHAT I'VE GOT PREPARED FOR HIM!

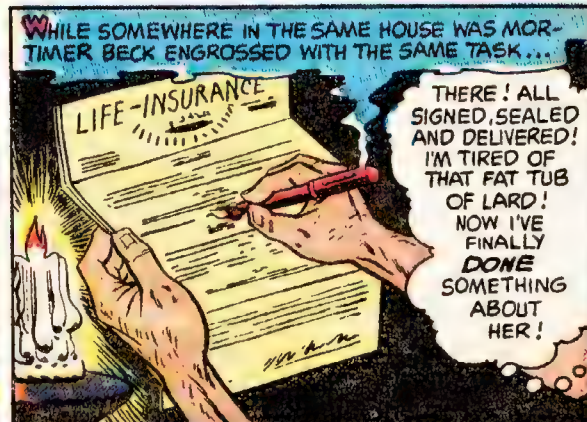


WAIT TILL SHE FINDS OUT WHAT I'VE GOT PREPARED FOR HER!



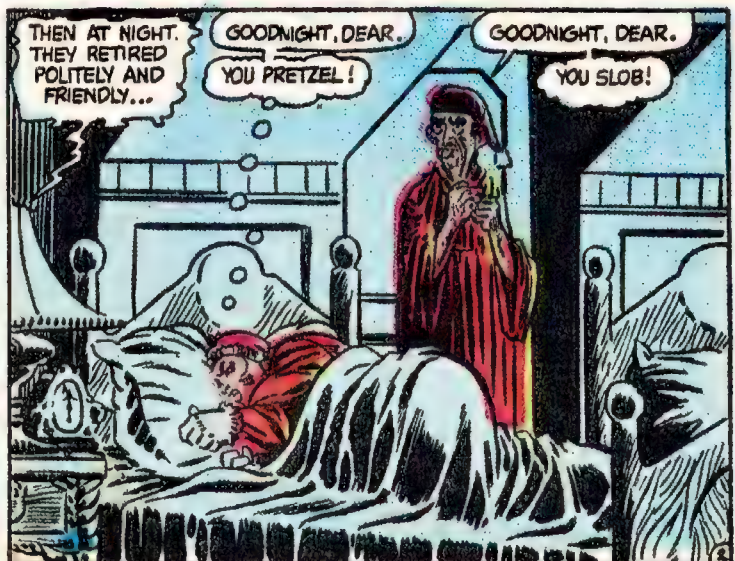
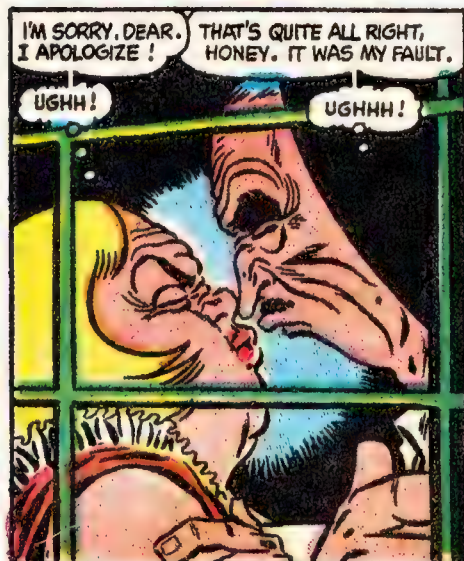
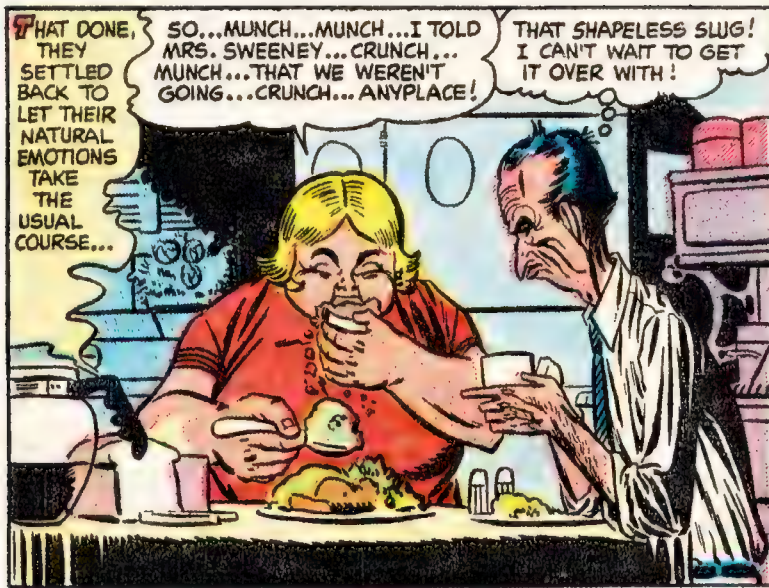
IT ALL BEGAN WHEN SARAH BECK TOOK OUT LIFE INSURANCE ON HER HUSBAND...

THERE! ALL SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED! I'M TIRED OF THAT SKINNY LITTLE PIP-SQUEAK! NOW I'VE FINALLY **DONE** SOMETHING ABOUT HIM!



WHILE SOMEWHERE IN THE SAME HOUSE WAS MORTIMER BECK ENGROSSSED WITH THE SAME TASK...

THERE! ALL SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED! I'M TIRED OF THAT FAT TUB OF LARD! NOW I'VE FINALLY **DONE** SOMETHING ABOUT HER!



BUT NIGHT BROUGHT A NIGHTMARE TO SARAH...



WHAT AM I DOING IN THIS PIT? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO TO ME?

NOTHING REALLY, DEAR. JUST PULL THIS LEVER DOWN AND---

HELP! I'LL BE CRUSHED! HELP!

THAT'S RIGHT, DEAR. YOU'RE SO FAT I THOUGHT THE BEST THING WOULD BE TO MAKE YOU SKINNY! HA, HA...

WHILE MORT HAD A DIFFERENT NIGHTMARE...



OH... I FEEL LIKE A PIG! YOU FED ME TOO MUCH! M-MY STOMACH--IT'S SWELLING!

THAT'S RIGHT, DEAR. I'VE JUST PUT IN A LITTLE SOMETHING TO POISON YOU!

ARRRGHHH-H... THAT PAIN--CAN'T STAND IT! AIEE!EEE!

I GOT TIRED, OF SEEING YOU SO SKINNY, DARLING. NOW I WANT TO SEE YOU FAT AS A HORSE! HA, HA...

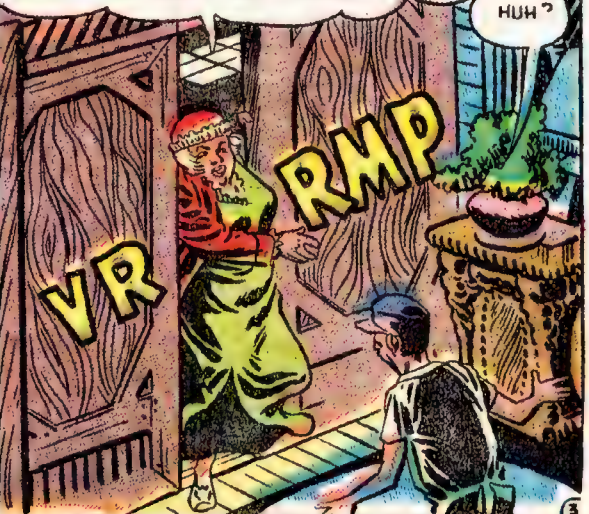
NEXT DAY FOUND BOTH OF THEM TENSE AND SUSPICIOUS...



WHAT'S HE DOING ALL DRESSED UP LIKE A CARPENTER? I'LL JUST STEP INSIDE, AND---

BANG BANG

Y-AHAHAH! I'M STUCK! WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ME? THE DOORS ARE CLOSING!



HUH?

VR RMP



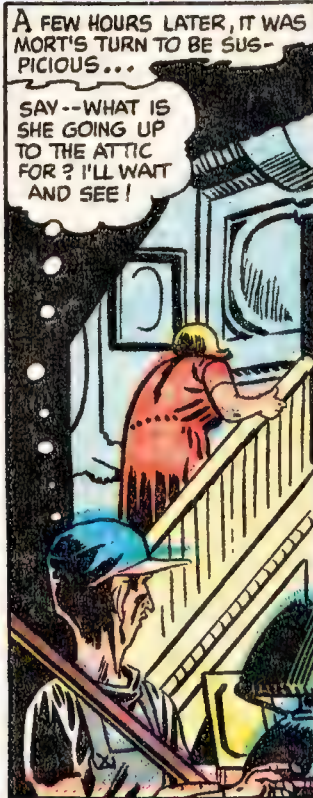
GET ME OUT, YOU FOOL! YOU STUPID NITWIT! YOU OAF!

ALL RIGHT-- ALL RIGHT, MY DEAR! HAVE PATIENCE!



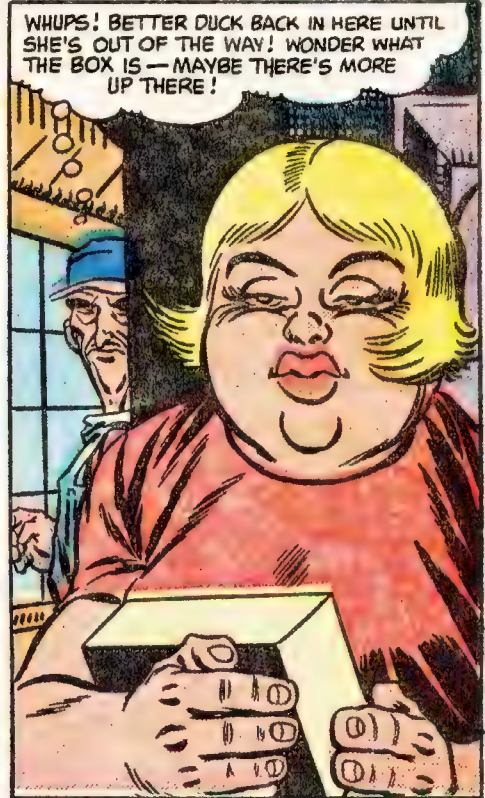
YOU'VE BEEN GETTING TOO BIG RECENTLY. SO I WIDENED THE DOORS. I HAVE TO FIX THE ENTIRE HOUSE--FROM CELLAR TO ATTIC. THE DOORS CAN BE SUITED TO ANY WIDTH DESIRED!

WELL--DON'T PRACTICE ON ME!

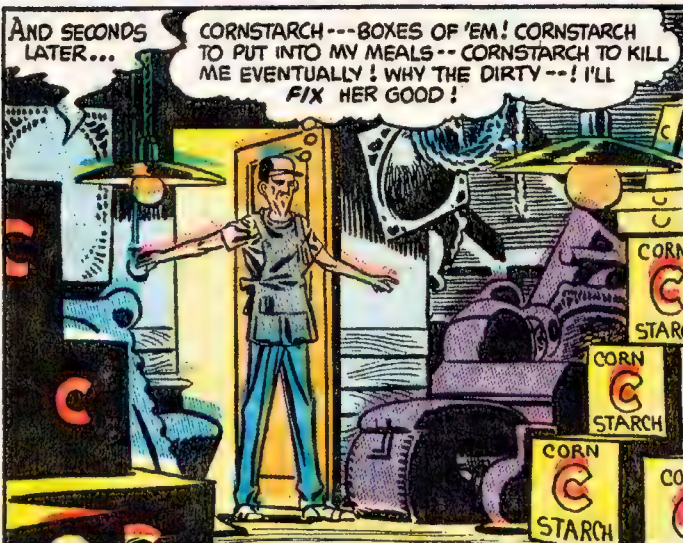


A FEW HOURS LATER, IT WAS MORT'S TURN TO BE SUSPICIOUS...

SAY--WHAT IS SHE GOING UP TO THE ATTIC FOR? I'LL WAIT AND SEE!



WHUPS! BETTER DUCK BACK IN HERE UNTIL SHE'S OUT OF THE WAY! WONDER WHAT THE BOX IS--MAYBE THERE'S MORE UP THERE!



AND SECONDS LATER...

CORNSTARCH---BOXES OF 'EM! CORNSTARCH TO PUT INTO MY MEALS-- CORNSTARCH TO KILL ME EVENTUALLY! WHY THE DIRTY--! I'LL FIX HER GOOD!



SO BOTH OF THEM WENT TO BED THAT NIGHT, CONVINCED COMPLETELY...

GOODNIGHT. DEAR SLEEP TIGHT!

TOMORROW

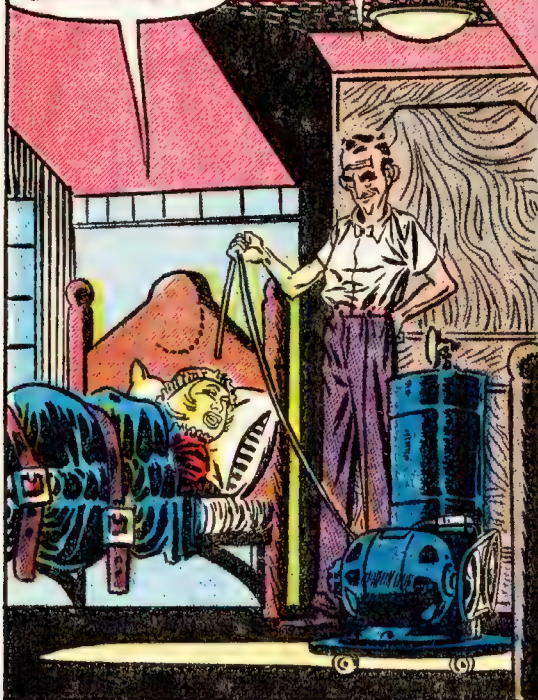
YOU TOO, HONEY.

IT'LL BE TOMORROW FOR YOU!

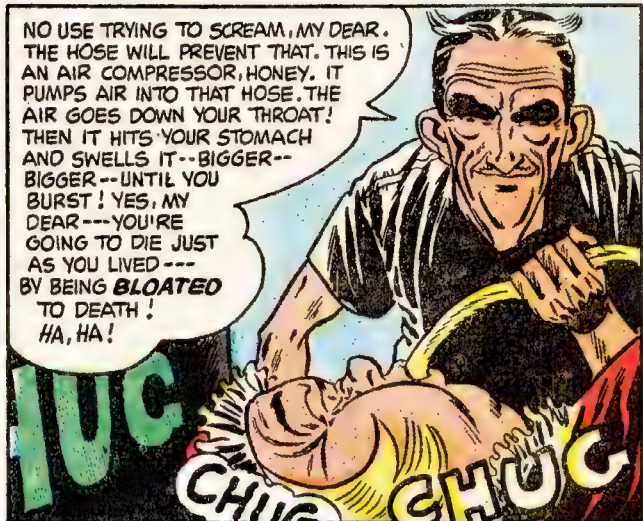
AND TOMORROW WAS THE DAY! WHEN SARAH AWOKE...

WHA---T ? I-- I'M STRAPPED DOWN! MORT--W-WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ? ANSWER ME !

THIS IS A RUBBER HOSE ,MY DEAR. I'M GOING TO STICK IT DOWN YOUR THROAT!

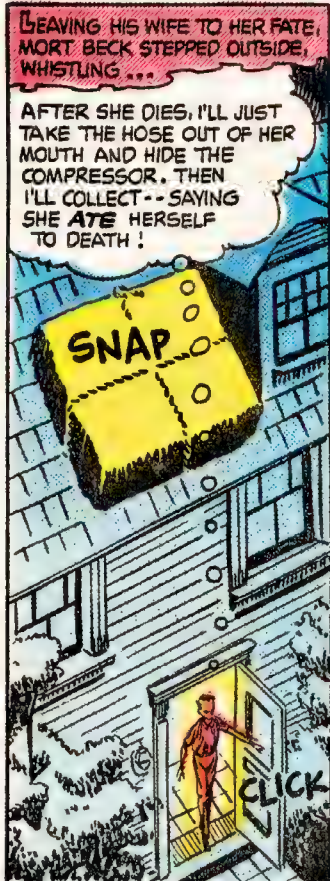


NO USE TRYING TO SCREAM, MY DEAR. THE HOSE WILL PREVENT THAT. THIS IS AN AIR COMPRESSOR, HONEY. IT PUMPS AIR INTO THAT HOSE. THE AIR GOES DOWN YOUR THROAT! THEN IT HITS YOUR STOMACH AND SWELLS IT--BIGGER--BIGGER--UNTIL YOU BURST! YES, MY DEAR---YOU'RE GOING TO DIE JUST AS YOU LIVED --- BY BEING **BLOATED** TO DEATH ! HA, HA !



LEAVING HIS WIFE TO HER FATE, MORT BECK STEPPED OUTSIDE, WHISTLING...

AFTER SHE DIES, I'LL JUST TAKE THE HOSE OUT OF HER MOUTH AND HIDE THE COMPRESSOR. THEN I'LL COLLECT-- SAYING SHE **ATE** HERSELF TO DEATH !



BUT SARAH HAD GONE TO THE ATTIC -- NOT FOR CORNSTARCH -- BUT TO FIX THE STONE SLAB SO IT COULD TOPPLE DOWN THE MOMENT SOMEONE STEPPED THROUGH THE DOOR-- SOMEONE LIKE MORT, WHO WOULD GO TO WORK EARLY THAT NEXT MORNING--- SO MORT BECK WAS MADE EVEN **SKINNIER**, BY THE CRUSHING WEIGHT! AND NOW NEITHER ONE WOULD COLLECT IN THIS **FAMILY MIXUP!** HEH, HEH, HEH...



CDC
THIS MAGAZINE IS
HAUNTED

NP18

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THIS MAGAZINE IS

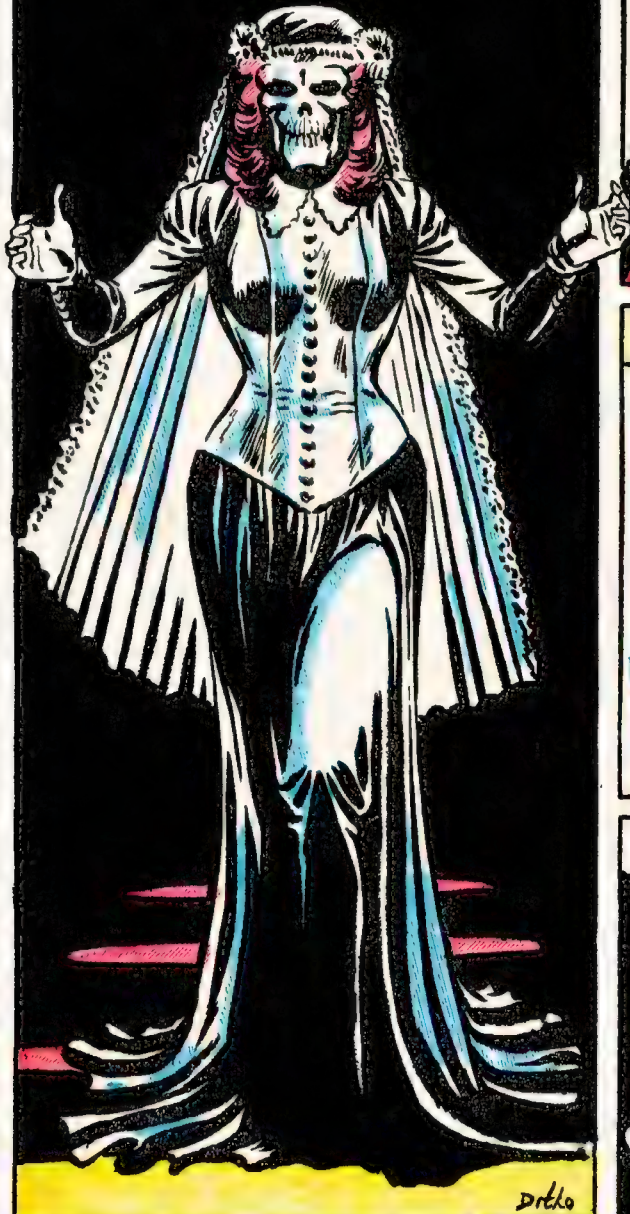
HAUNTED

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Bridegroom, Come Back!



WHEN SHE FIRST SEES ME, HER EYES ARE SHINING AND SHE IS RADIANT WITH LOVE ...

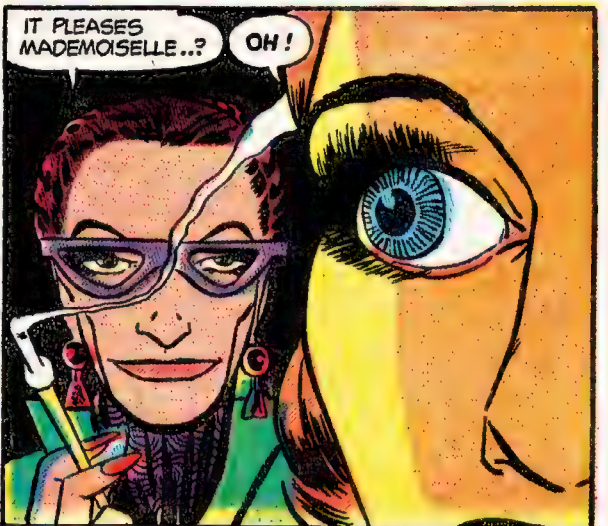


HER HAND TREMBLES AS SHE REACHES FORWARD AND STROKES ME TENDERLY...



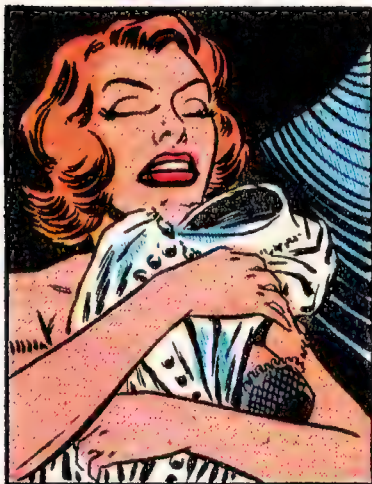
IT PLEASES
MADEMOISELLE...?

OH!

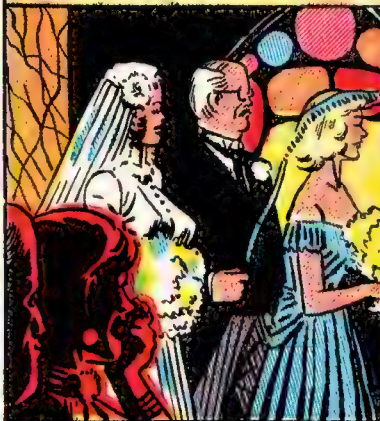




SO WHY AT THIS MOMENT SHOULD I BE RUSTLING WITH DREAD?



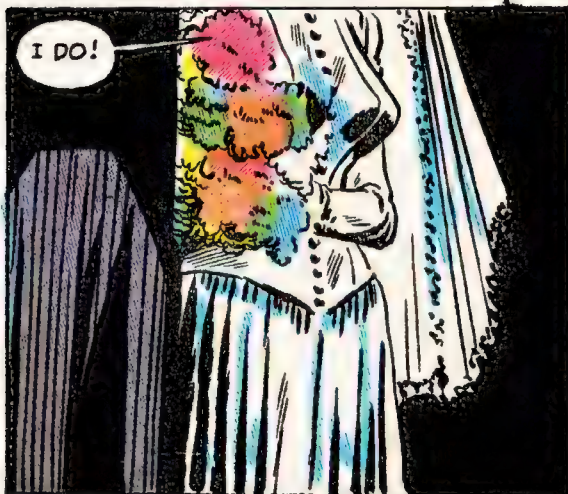
THE DAYS HAVE FLOWN...AND NOW THE ORGAN'S PEALING TONES ARE ECHOING THROUGH THE CHURCH. I CAN FEEL THE EXCITED THUMPING OF MY WEARER'S HEART AS SHE WALKS SLOWLY UP THE AISLE...



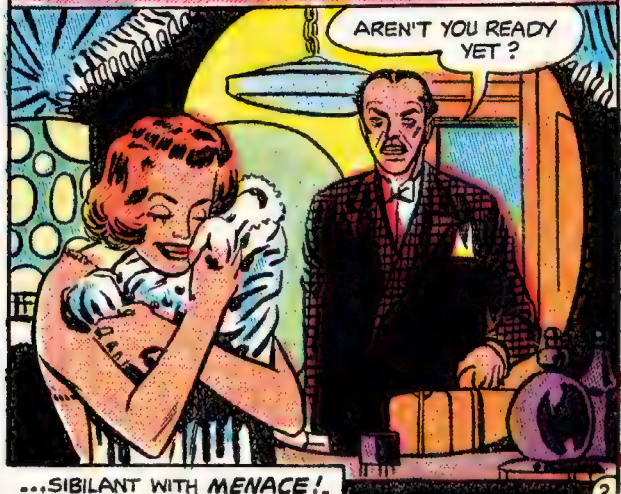
THEN I SEE THE BRIDEGROOM! I SEE THE EVIL IN HIS EYES! I TRY TO SHRINK BACK AS HE APPROACHES SMILINGLY!



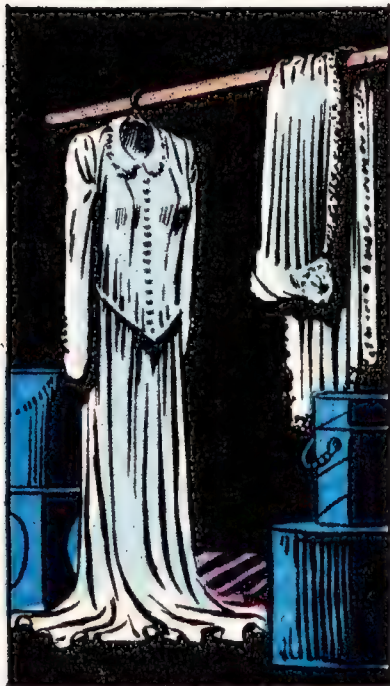
BUT I AM ONLY A WEDDING GOWN, MADE OF TAFFETA AND LACE, WITHOUT THE POWERS OF MOVEMENT OR SPEECH! I CANNOT WARN HER!



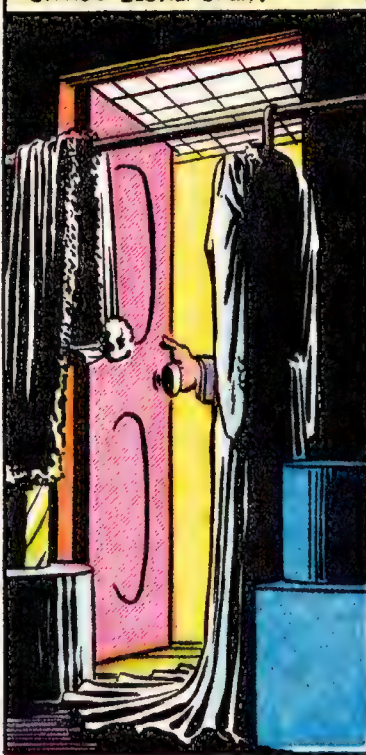
AFTER THE RECEPTION, LONGLY DISROBING, SHE HOLDS ME IN HER ARMS AND PASSES HER SOFT CHEEK AGAINST ME -- BUT THEN I HEAR HIS VOICE...



THEY HAVE GONE ON THEIR HONEY-MOON...AND I HANG LIMPLY IN THE SOUNDLESS CLOSET, OPPRESSED BY THE DARKNESS, LONGING FOR HER RETURN, LONGING TO BE FONDLED AGAIN BY HER SOFT HANDS... HOPING AGAINST HOPE THAT SHE WILL RETURN!



MONTHS HAVE PASSED--A GLOB OF TIME MADE EXCRUCIATINGLY LONG BY SUSPENSEFUL WAITING... AND AT LAST THE CLOSET DOOR SWINGS SLOWLY OPEN!



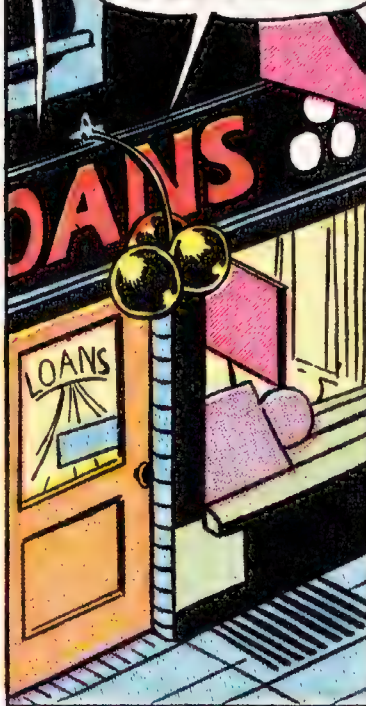
BUT ONLY HE HAS COME! HE ALONE WITH EVIL LURKING IN HIS HEAVY-LIDDED EYES! HE REACHES FORWARD WITH CURVING FINGERS...



...TEARS ME ROUGHLY FROM THE HANGER, THROWS ME OVER HIS SHOULDER, AND STRIDES ACROSS THE ROOM! HE HAS KILLED HER! EVERY THREAD IN ME CRIES OUT SOUNDLESSLY! HE HAS KILLED HER! BUT WHAT CAN I DO...? I AM ONLY A WEDDING GOWN ...



HOW MUCH WILL YOU GIVE ME FOR IT? IT IS VERY BEAUTIFUL. BUT HOW MANY PEOPLE COME TO PAWNSHOPS FOR WEDDING GOWNS? TWENTY DOLLARS IS THE BEST I CAN DO...



SO NOW I HANG IN THE GLOOM AND DUST OF THE PAWNSHOP. THE SMELLS ARE SOUR HERE...AND NO BRIDE EVER ENTERS.



BUT THEN ONE DAY... FUNNY YOU SHOULD ASK FOR A WEDDING GOWN. JUST SO HAPPENS I HAVE ONE BACK HERE...



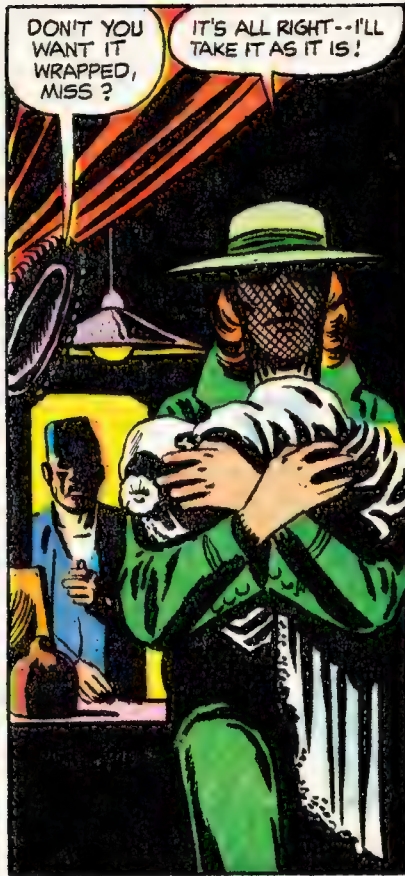
THIS GIRL WEARS A THICK VEIL OVER HER FACE. HER VOICE IS FLAT AND DEAD. AND WHEN SHE TOUCHES ME, HER HAND IS COLD...



I'LL TAKE IT!

DON'T YOU WANT IT WRAPPED, MISS?

IT'S ALL RIGHT--I'LL TAKE IT AS IT IS!



SO NOW I AM BEING WORN TO A SECOND WEDDING... BUT SHE HASN'T WASHED ME! STILL GRITTY WITH PAWNSHOP DUST, I ENSHROUD HER PAINFULLY THIN BODY...



THAT'S A PRETTY FANCY OUTFIT FOR A WEDDING, DARLING.

THAT VOICE! HE IS THE BRIDEGROOM! THE SAME ONE-- THE KILLER! AND HE PLANS TO KILL THIS POOR GIRL TOO! IF ONLY I COULD CRY OUT...! I TRY NOT TO LISTEN TO THE MUMBLED CEREMONY!



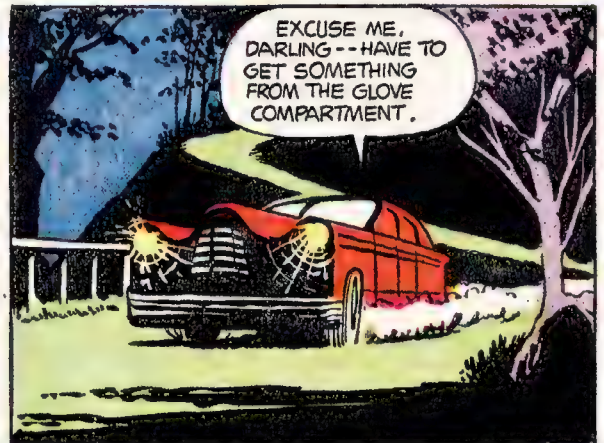
...TO BE YOUR LAWFUL WEDDED HUSBAND!

I DO!

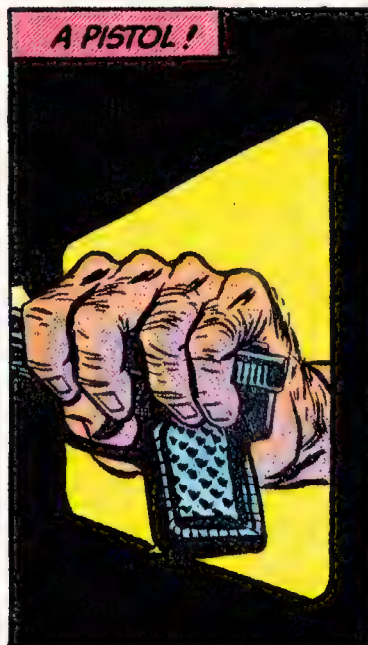
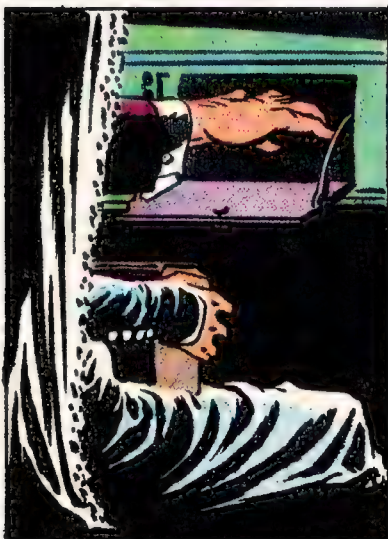
THAT DIDN'T TAKE LONG, DARLING-- DID IT? YOU WANT TO GET OUT OF THAT GOWN SOMEWHERE--SO WE CAN START ON OUR HONEYMOON?



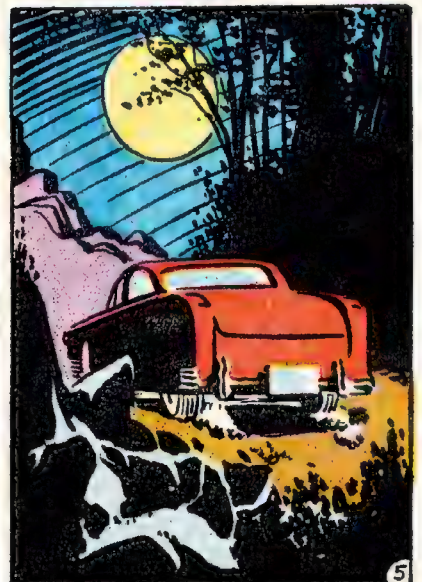
NO...I WANT TO WEAR IT!

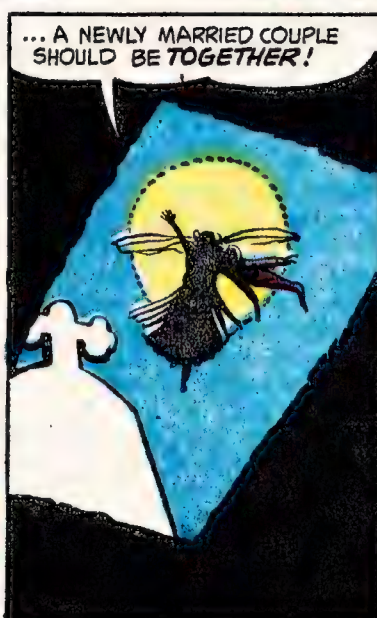
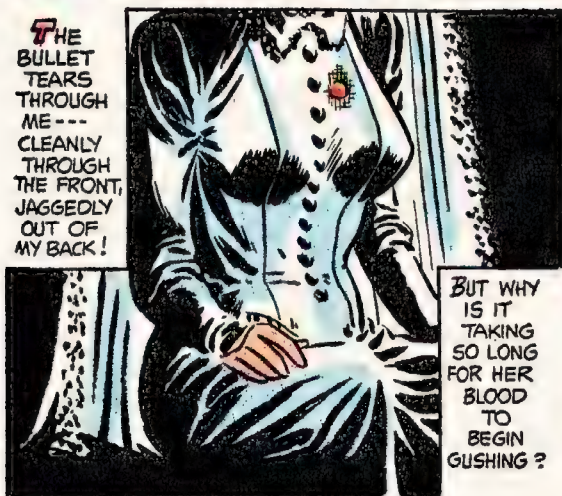
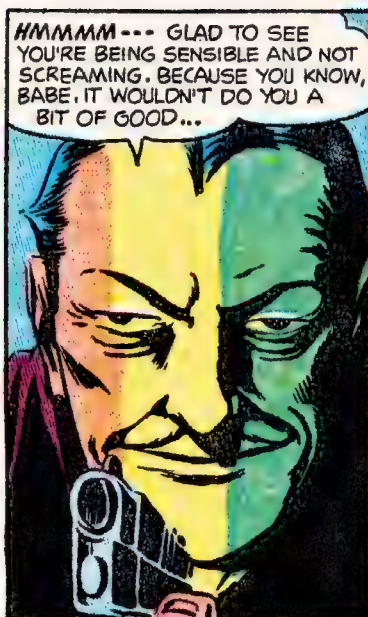


HER EYES ARE FIXED ON THE ROAD AHEAD...BUT I SEE WHAT IS IN HIS HAND WHEN HE WITH-DRAWS IT !



AND A MOMENT LATER, THE CAR GRINDS TO A HALT !







STRANGE
SUSPENSE STORIES

No 19

STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION

operator--YOU'VE GOT TO GET
THROUGH--he's innocent!

10¢



FOR THE CHOPPER. AND TONY, THE OLD BANK'S VAULTS HAD BEEN EGG-SHELL EASY. AND AHEAD, THE PERFECT HIDEOUT LAY WAITING FOR THEM. IT WAS--

A NICE QUIET PLACE!

BUT FATE PLANNED FIRE-WORKS NOW!

TAKE THAT ARM AWAY, TONY--YOU CRAZY? WHAT IF THE CHOPPER SEES?

THAT OLD HAS-BEEN'S SLEEPIN' LIKE A PIG BACK THERE--



ONCE THE HEAT'S OFF, WE'LL GIVE HIM THE BRUSH, KATE... GO AWAY TOGETHER. MEXICO, RIO, ALL THE BRIGHT SPOTS...



MAYBE...MAYBE NOT, TONY. NOBODY EVER GAVE OLD CHOPPER THE BRUSH-OFF YET. UP HERE IN THE STICKS, ACCIDENTS GOT A WAY OF HAPPENING...







DOUBLE-CROSSING
RAT! SHOULD HAVE
LEFT HIM IN THE
GUTTER WHERE I
FOUND HIM THREE
YEARS AGO! HE'S
GOTTA GO ---
THERE'S NO
OTHER WAY!



WHAT IN THE NAME OF
TRACKS OF A COUGAR ---!
MOUNTAIN LION! BIG
ONE, TOO!



HUNDRED AND SIXTY IF THE DEVIL
WEIGHS AN OUNCE! MUST COME
POKIN' AROUND HERE LOOKIN' FOR
FOOD --THAT'S IT, SURE!



YOU'RE GONNA GET YOUR FEED,
KITTY... A REGULAR BANQUET...
A FEAST ON RAT!



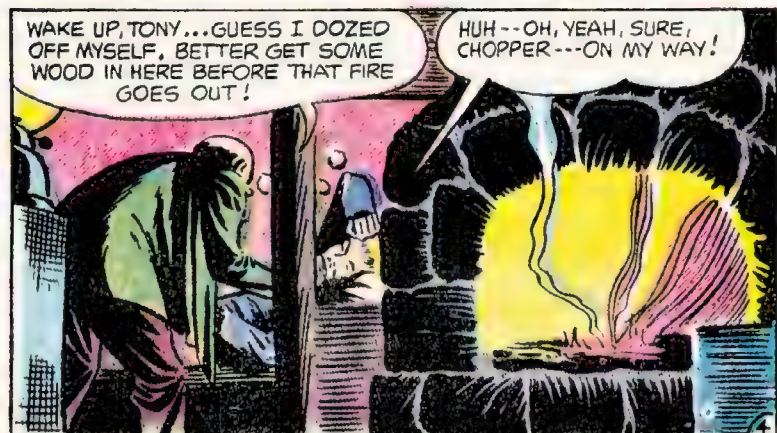
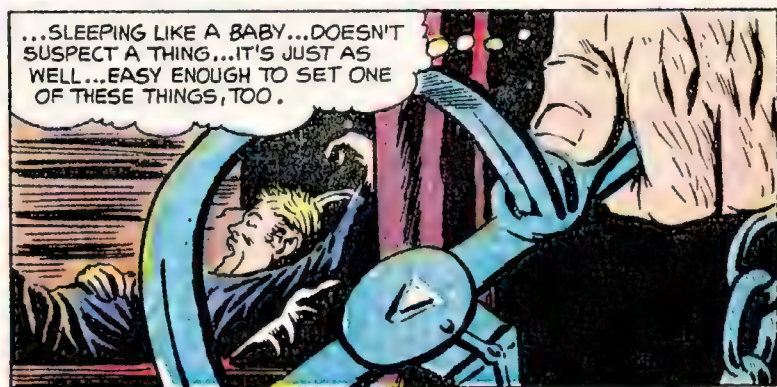
LATER... SOME CHOW!
FIGURE I
MIGHT CATCH A LITTLE
SNOOZE, CHOPPER.

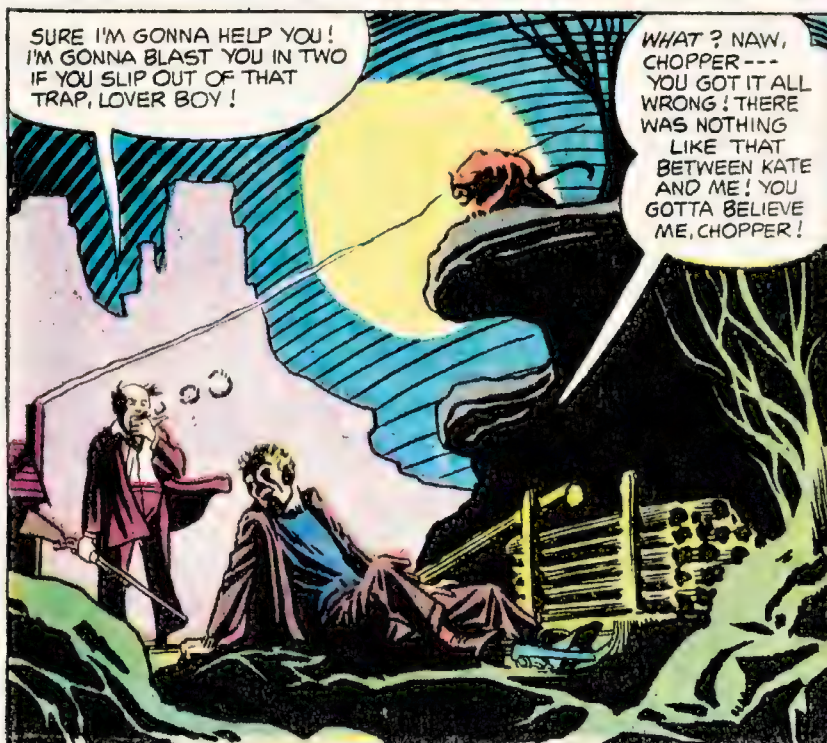
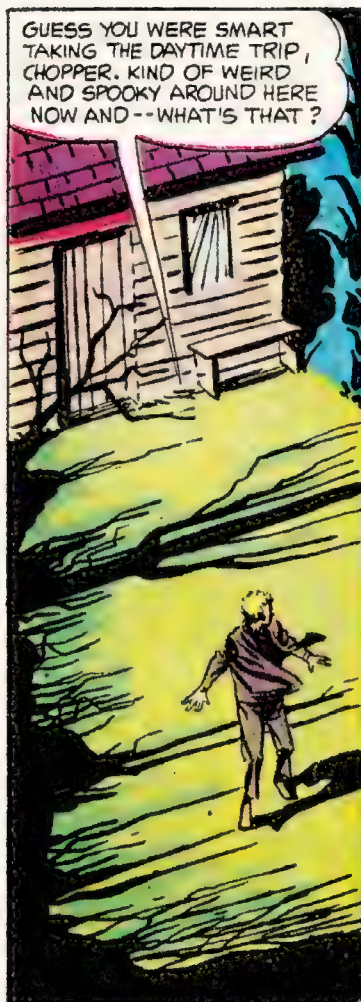
NOT FORGETTING IT WILL BE
YOUR TURN TO BRING IN
WOOD, ARE YOU, TONY?

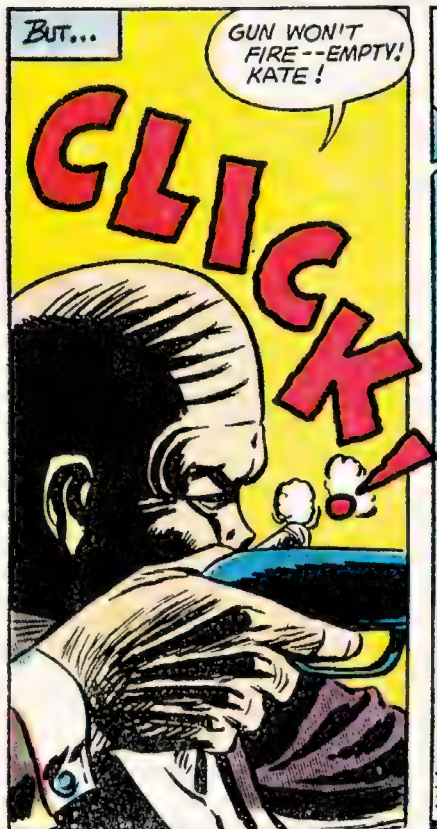
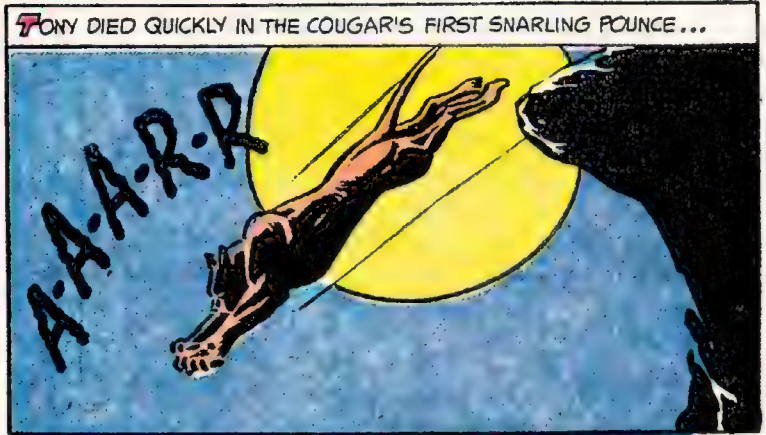


NUH-UNH, I AIN'T FOR-
GETTIN' CHOPPER. IF
I DON'T WAKE WHEN
THE FIRE BURNS
DOWN --

THEN I'LL WAKE YOU,
TONY --- DON'T
WORRY.









science fiction
SPACE ADVENTURES

No 12

SCIENCE FICTION **SPACE**

ADVENTURES

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION

10¢





RACKET SQUAD

No 12



RACKET SQUAD

IN ACTION

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION



STRANGE
SUSPENSE STORIES

No 20

STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES

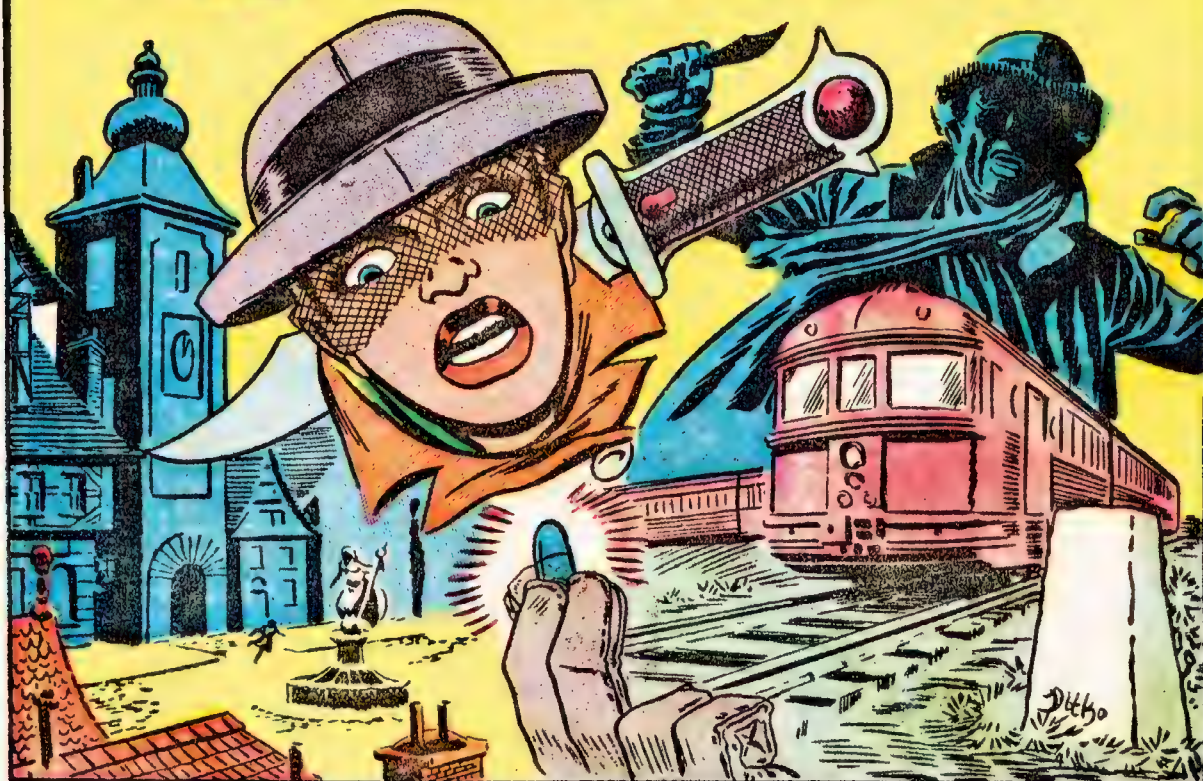
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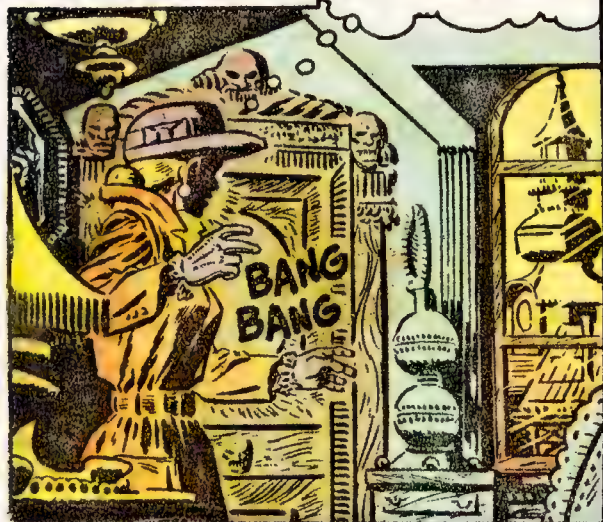
THE TINY VIAL CONTAINED THE MOST DEADLY PLAGUE GERMS KNOWN TO SCIENCE...ENOUGH, IN THAT ONE LITTLE VIAL TO DESTROY LIFE WITHIN A RADIUS OF A THOUSAND MILES! THE WOMAN KNOWN AS MAGDA TONESCU WAS WILLING TO GAMBLE HER LIFE FOR THE TWO-MILLION DOLLARS OFFERED FOR THE VIAL, AND THAT WAS WHY SHE WAS ABOARD THE NOTORIOUS TRANS-EUROPE EXPRESS, SWEATING OUT...

THE PAYOFF!



ON THE DREARY CHAMBERS OF AN ANCIENT APARTMENT HOUSE, SITUATED NEAR THE IRON CURTAIN, A WOMAN KNOWN TO POLICE AS MAGDA TONESCU AWAITED A FATEFUL RENDEZVOUS...

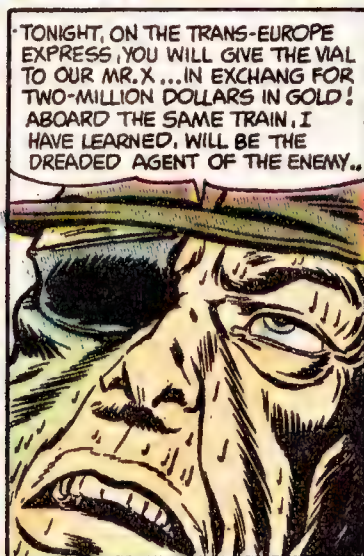
SERGEI SHOULD'VE BEEN HERE AN HOUR AGO WITH THAT VIAL...SOMETHING MUST'VE GONE WRONG! IF THOSE GERMS EVER GET INTO THE HANDS OF...W-WHAT'S THAT?

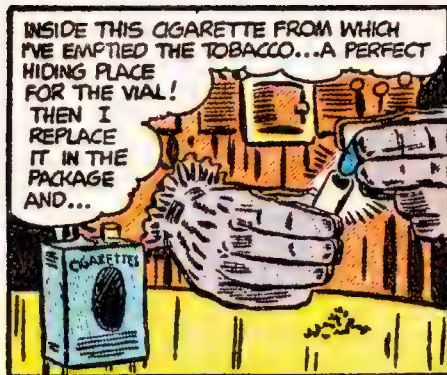


S-SERGEI! WHAT DELAYED YOU? WHAT... BLOOD ALL OVER YOUR COAT!

QUICK...SLAM THE DOOR SHUT AND DOUBLE-BOLT IT! ENEMY AGENTS...THEY ALMOST GOT ME!



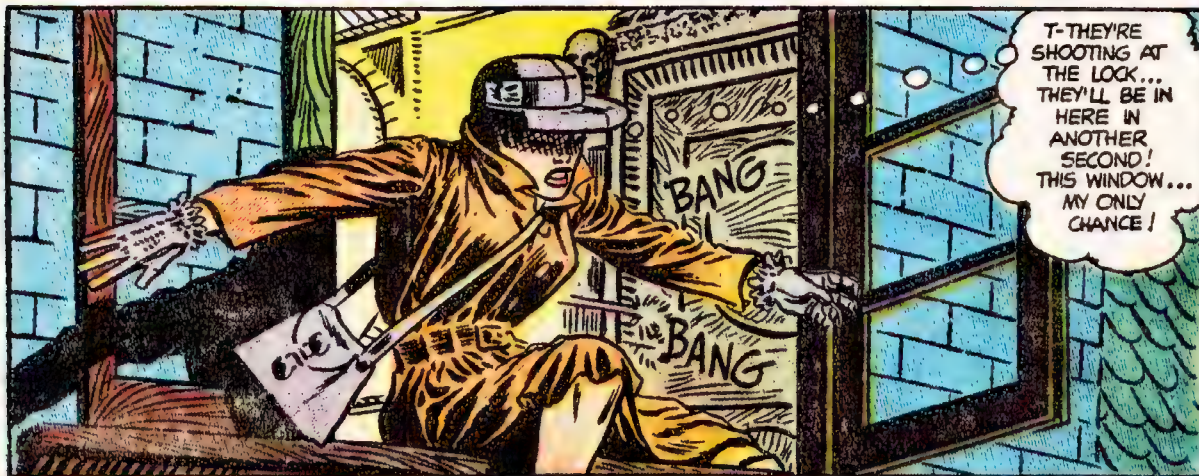




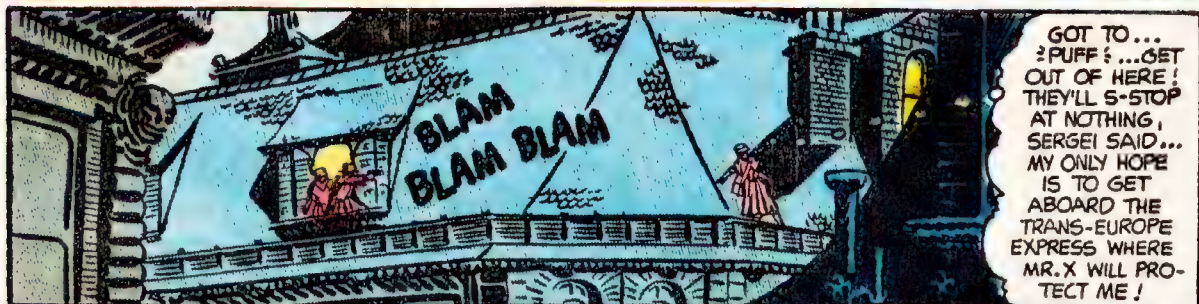
INSIDE THIS CIGARETTE FROM WHICH I'VE EMPTIED THE TOBACCO...A PERFECT HIDING PLACE FOR THE VIAL! THEN I REPLACE IT IN THE PACKAGE AND...



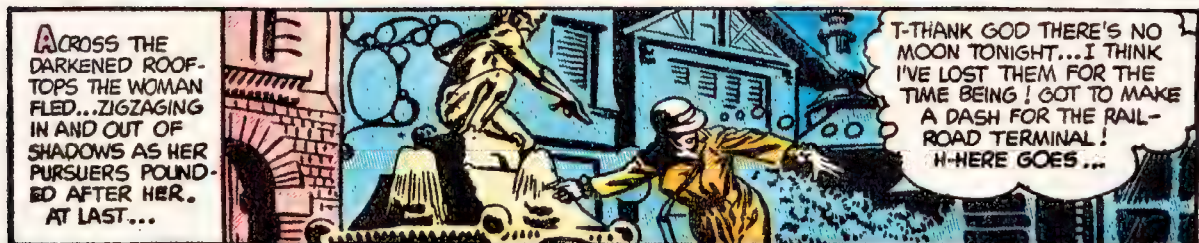
FOOTSTEPS...RUNNING TOWARD MY DOOR! THE ENEMIES WHO MURDERED SERGEI...THEY MUST'VE FOLLOWED HIM HERE! I-I'VE GOT TO CLEAR OUT!



T-THEY'RE SHOOTING AT THE LOCK... THEY'LL BE IN HERE IN ANOTHER SECOND! THIS WINDOW... MY ONLY CHANCE!



GOT TO... :PUFF: ...GET OUT OF HERE! THEY'LL S-STOP AT NOTHING, SERGEI SAID... MY ONLY HOPE IS TO GET ABOARD THE TRANS-EUROPE EXPRESS WHERE MR. X WILL PROTECT ME!



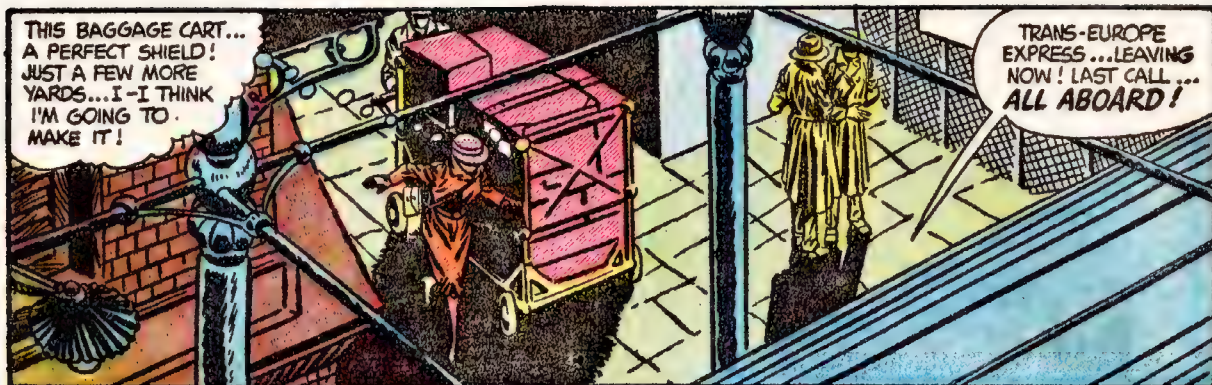
ACROSS THE DARKENED ROOFTOPS THE WOMAN FLED...ZIGZAGING IN AND OUT OF SHADOWS AS HER PURSUERS POUNDED AFTER HER. AT LAST...

T-THANK GOD THERE'S NO MOON TONIGHT...I THINK I'VE LOST THEM FOR THE TIME BEING! GOT TO MAKE A DASH FOR THE RAILROAD TERMINAL! H-HERE GOES...



ALL ABOARD! LAST CALL!

T-THE ENEMY AGENTS... THEY'RE ALL OVER THE PLACE! I'VE GOT TO GET ABOARD THAT TRAIN... BUT HOW? W-WAIT!! OVER THERE...



THIS BAGGAGE CART...
A PERFECT SHIELD!
JUST A FEW MORE
YARDS...I-I THINK
I'M GOING TO
MAKE IT!

TRANS-EUROPE
EXPRESS...LEAVING
NOW! LAST CALL...
ALL ABOARD!

WITH A DEAFENING ROAR, THE TRAIN
STARTED TO MOVE. SUDDENLY, A LITHE
FIGURE DARTED FORWARD...AND...

A FUSILADE OF BULLETS CRASHED
INTO THE TRAIN, PIERCING METAL
AND SHATTERING GLASS. BUT, IN
THE SHADOWS OF THE DARK
ENTRY PLATFORM...

FOR LONG MINUTES MAGDA TONESCU
CROUCHED FEARFULLY IN THE DARKNESS.
FINALLY, AS THE TRAIN HURLED THROUGH
THE MURKY NIGHT....



**LOOK! THE
DEAD ONE'S
PARTNER!**



M-MADE IT...SO FAR! NOW
TO FIND OUR MR. X...AND PRAY
THAT SCAR-FACE DOESN'T GET
ME FIRST!



TIME FOR ME TO TRY TO MAKE CON-
TACT WITH MR. X! T-TOO BAD SERGEI
DIED BEFORE HE HAD A CHANCE TO
DESCRIBE OUR FRIEND! ALL I KNOW
ABOUT THE MAN IS THAT MY LIFE IS
IN HIS HANDS! I-I SHUDDER TO
THINK OF MEETING SCAR-FACE
FIRST!



GLMFF!

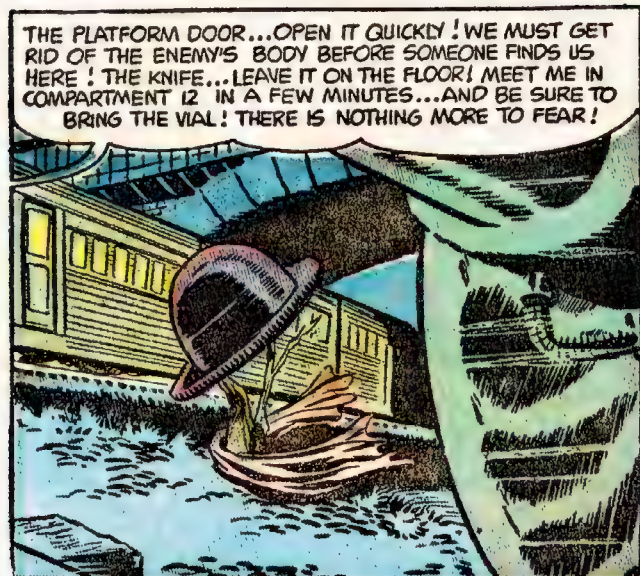
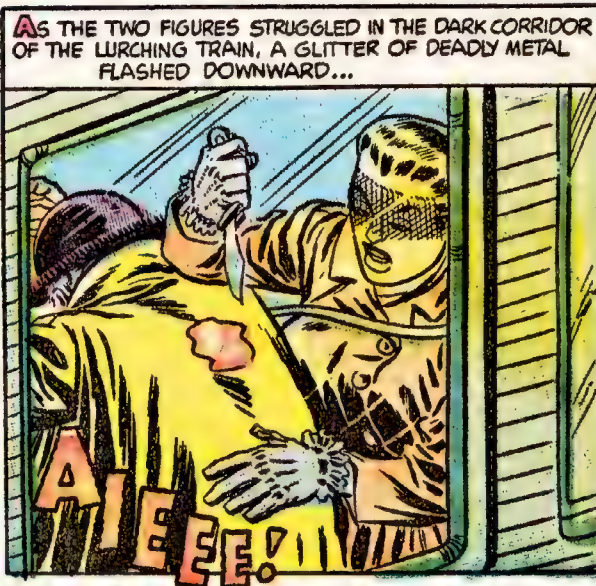
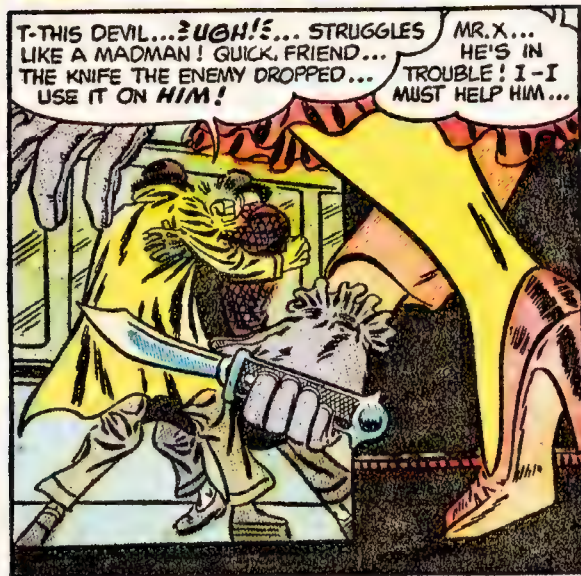
DON'T TRY TO SCREAM, LADY...IN
THIS OPERATION A MERE LIFE MEANS
LITTLE! I'VE BEEN ANXIOUSLY AWAITING
YOUR ARRIVAL...



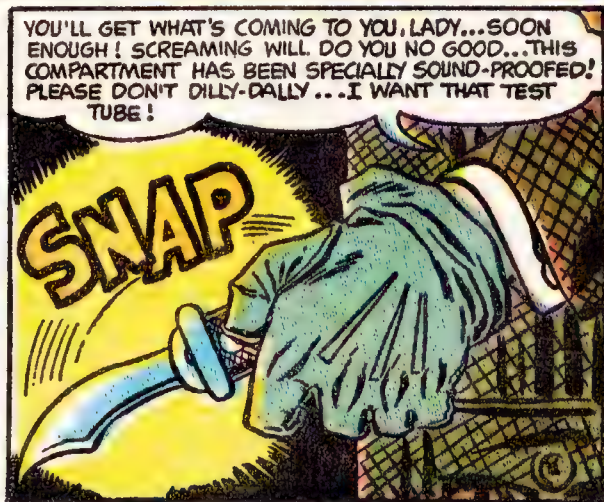
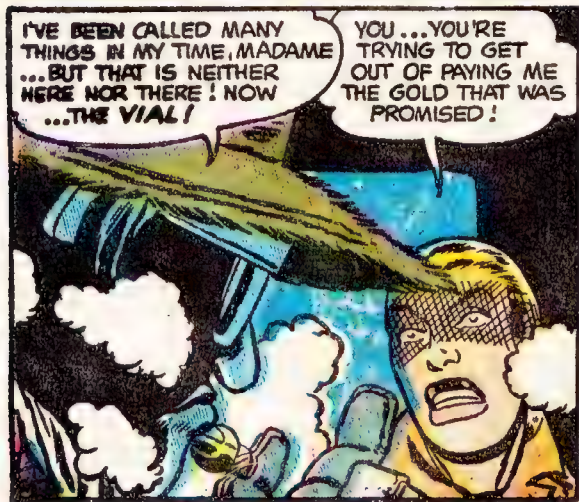
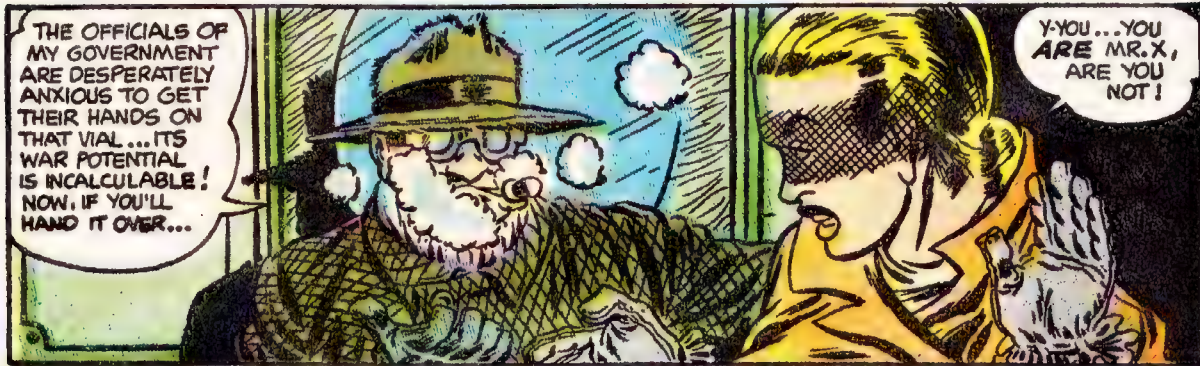
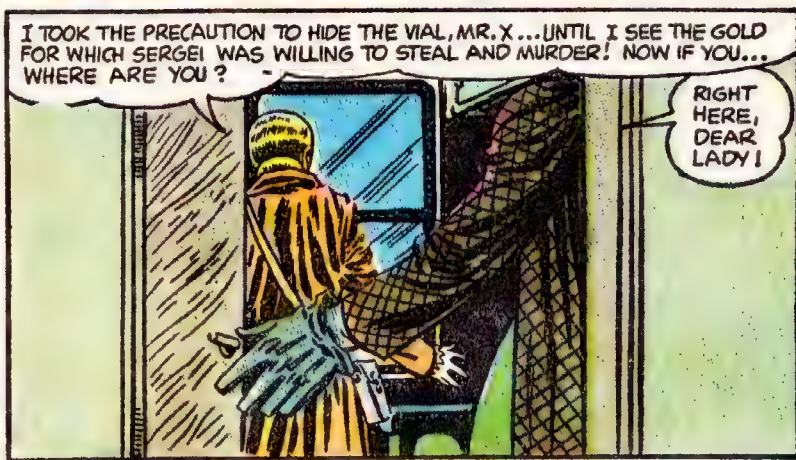
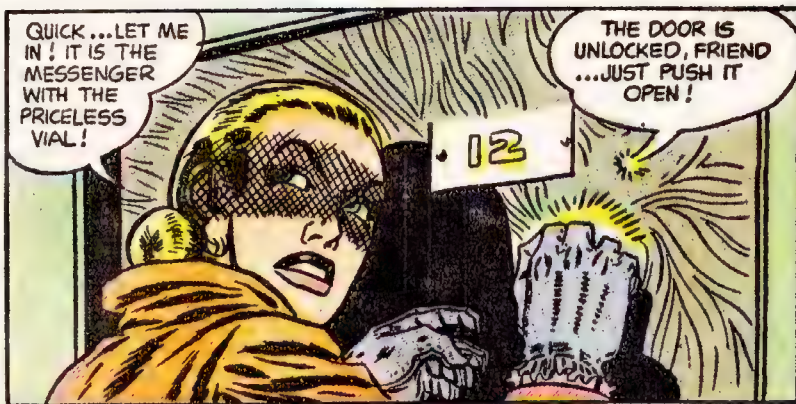
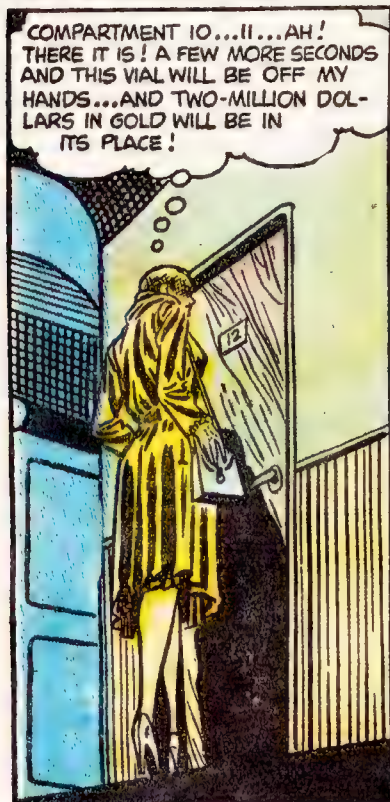
I'VE CAREFULLY EXAMINED
EVERYONE GETTING ABOARD
THE TRAIN...**YOU** ARE THE
ONE WHO CARRIES WHAT I
WANT! QUICK...THE **VIAL**...
GIVE IT TO ME!

H-HOW DO I KNOW YOU'RE
THE MAN SERGEI WANT-
ED ME TO MEET? THE
MONEY...W-WHERE
IS IT?

THE DEADLY BLADE INCHED CLOSER. THEN, SUDDENLY, IN THE DEEP DARKNESS, A PLATFORM DOOR OPENED...

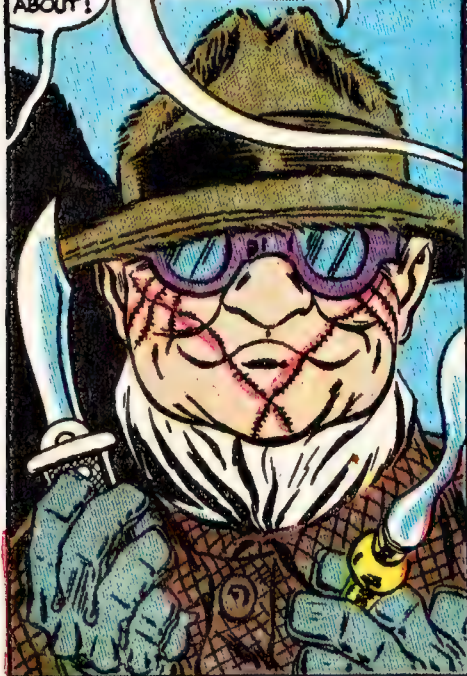


WITH THE FEELING OF UTTER DREAD LIFTED, MAGDA TONESCU WAITED FOR A FEW MINUTES. THEN...



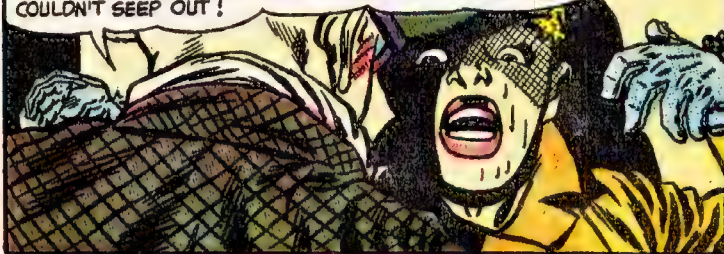
Y-YOU...
YOU'RE
THE
SCAR-
FACED
KILLER
I WAS
WARNED
ABOUT!

STEP INTO MY PARLOR SAID THE
SPIDER TO THE FLY! WHICH IS
PRECISELY WHAT YOU'VE DONE...
IN ADDITION TO HELPING ME
MURDER THE MAN YOU WERE
SUPPOSED TO CONTACT!
NOT VERY BRIGHT OF YOU!



HELP! AIIIEEEEE!

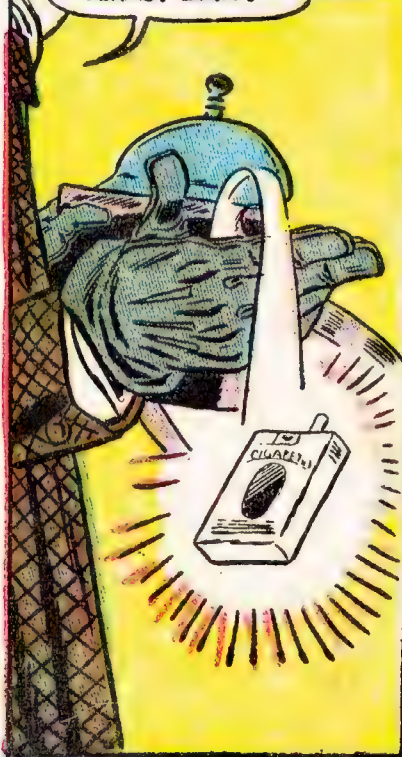
YOUR VOICE CANNOT BE HEARD FIVE FEET FROM HERE,
IDIOT...THE WALLS OF THIS COMPARTMENT HAVE BEEN
SO THICKLY INSULATED THAT EVEN ATOMIC RADIATION
COULDN'T SEEP OUT!



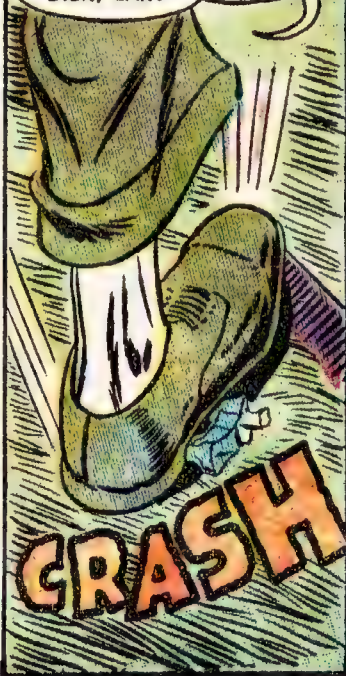
THE PRECIOUS VIAL...IT ISN'T HIDDEN IN HER CLOTHING OR ON HER
CORPSE! SHE TOOK PRECAUTIONS, SHE SAID...WAIT! OF COURSE
...HER **PURSE!**



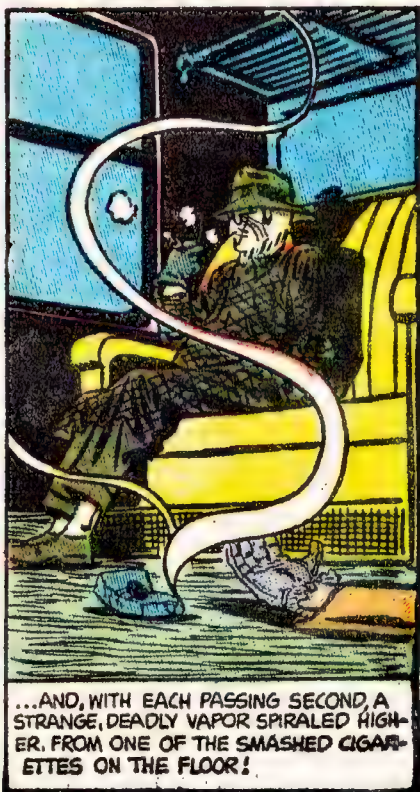
NO SIGN OF THE VIAL! JUST A
COMPACT...COMB...CIGARETTES!
I'VE PRACTICALLY TAKEN HER PURSE
APART...BUT NO DEADLY PLAGUE
GERMS! **BAH!**



ALL SHE BROUGHT WITH HER IS
THIS PILE OF WORTHLESS JUNK.
EITHER SHE WAS AN IMPOSTOR
...OR THE TINY VIAL IS HIDDEN
ELSEWHERE ON THE TRAIN!
I'LL WAIT HERE FOR A HALF-
HOUR, THEN BEGIN MY SEARCH
IN EVERY COMPARTMENT ON
EVERY CAR!



THE SCAR-FACED MAN TURNED AWAY IN
RAGE. THE SECONDS TICKED BY AS HE
WAITED IN HIS INGENUOUSLY INSULATED
COMPARTMENT...



...AND, WITH EACH PASSING SECOND, A
STRANGE, DEADLY VAPOR SPIRALED HIGH-
ER, FROM ONE OF THE SMASHED CIGAR-
ETTES ON THE FLOOR!

HUGO VON MOHL WAS A MAN AFRAID OF NOTHING! HE WAS CRUEL, RUTHLESS AND ARROGANT. HE WAS MASTER--ABSOLUTE MASTER--OF HIS PLANTATION. AND ALL WHO DARED DEFY HIM DIED HORRIBLY. THEN CAME ONE DEFIANCE THAT VON MOHL COULDN'T FIGHT. A DEFIANCE THAT WAS TO TEACH THE SADISTIC PLANTATION OWNER A LESSON -- A DEFIANCE THAT BILLED ITSELF AS...

VS

VON MOHL THE ANTS!

NO, NO, MASSAH!
NOT THE ANT PITS!
THEY WILL EAT ME
ALIVE! THEY WILL
STRIP THE FLESH
OF MY BONES!
EEEEEE!

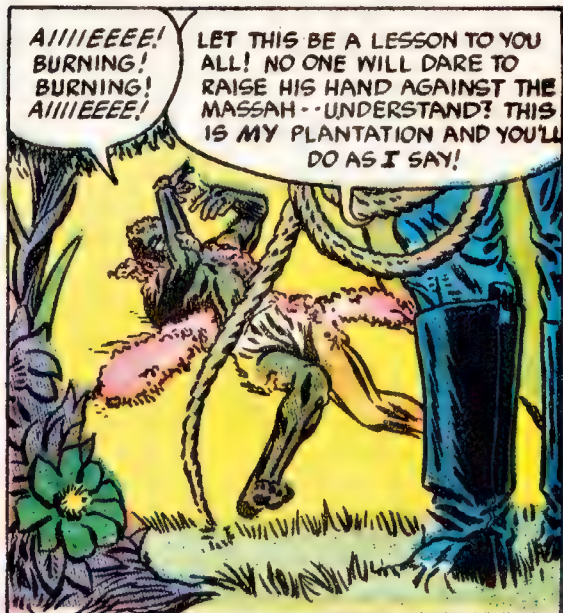
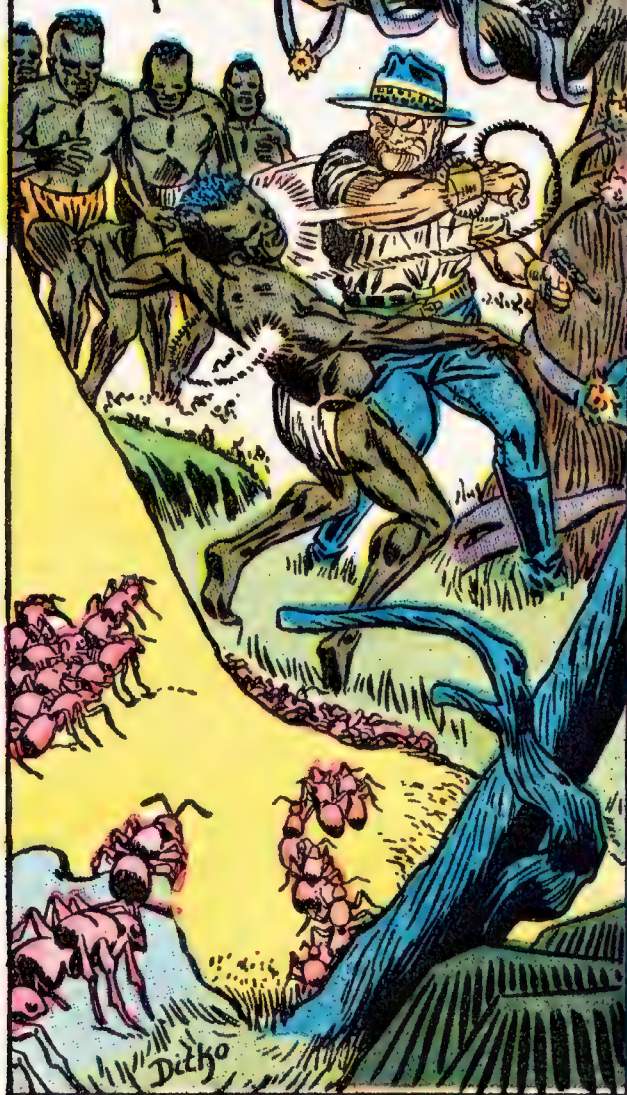
YOU WILL DIE AS I
HAVE ORDERED IT!
I'M MASTER HERE!
AND YOUR LIFE IS
FORFEIT FOR YOUR
DEFIANCE!

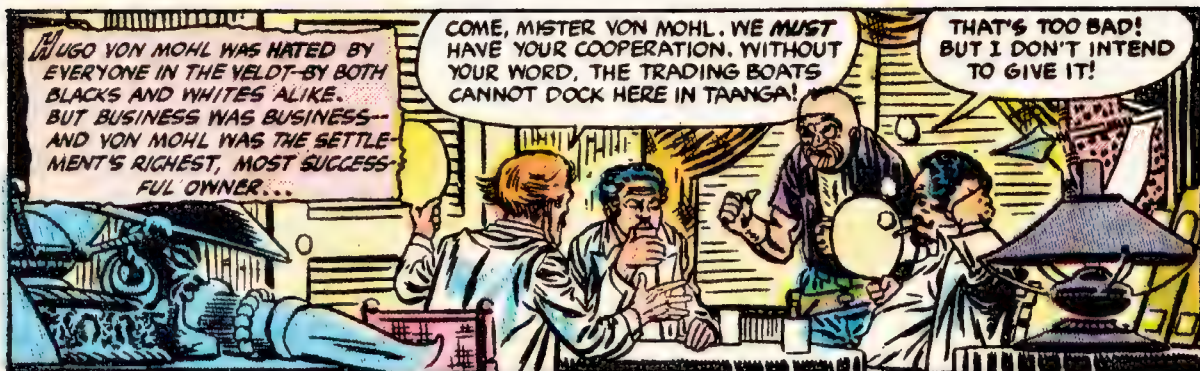
HUGO VON MOHL RULED WITH AN IRON FIST. TO HIM, AFRICA WAS THE LAND OF WEALTH AND POWER. HE WAS KING AND EMPEROR. HE WAS THE LAW. HE WAS THE NATIVE GOD! AND DEATH CAME TO THOSE WHO DEFIED HIM!

AIIEEEEE!
BURNING!
BURNING!
AIIEEEEE!

LET THIS BE A LESSON TO YOU
ALL! NO ONE WILL DARE TO
RAISE HIS HAND AGAINST THE
MASSAH--UNDERSTAND? THIS
IS MY PLANTATION AND YOU'LL
DO AS I SAY!

THIS WILL SHOW THESE IGNORANT
DOGS THAT I MEAN IT!





HUGO VON MOHL WAS HATED BY EVERYONE IN THE VELDT--BY BOTH BLACKS AND WHITES ALIKE. BUT BUSINESS WAS BUSINESS--AND VON MOHL WAS THE SETTLEMENT'S RICHEST, MOST SUCCESSFUL OWNER...

COME, MISTER VON MOHL. WE *MUST* HAVE YOUR COOPERATION. WITHOUT YOUR WORD, THE TRADING BOATS CANNOT DOCK HERE IN TAANGA!

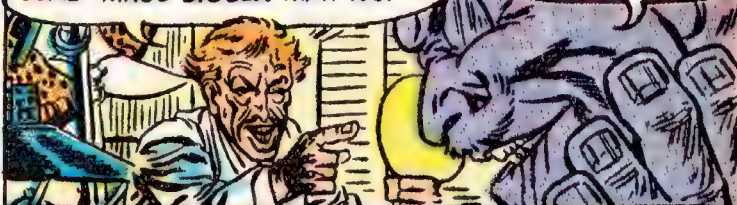
THAT'S TOO BAD! BUT I DON'T INTEND TO GIVE IT!

I HAVE MY OWN AGREEMENT WITH THOSE BOAT-OWNERS. I CAN SELL MY RUBBER HARVEST FOR THE LOWER PRICE--AND I DON'T PLAN TO JOIN ANY UNION WHICH RAISES THEIR PRICE!



YOU'RE A DIRTY DEVIL, VON MOHL. ONE OF THESE DAYS YOU'LL FIND OUT THAT YOU'RE NOT GOD. YOU'LL FIND THAT THERE ARE SOME THINGS *BIGGER* THAN YOU!

YOU FRIGHTEN ME, PETERS. YES--I'M TREMBLING! HA, HA...



MASSAHS! MASSAHS! MUCH TROUBLE! BIG DANGER APPROACHES! RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!



THE RED DEATH COMES! THE ANTS OF KINPUR!



WHAT? THE ANT INVASION? BUT THE GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES TOLD US THERE WEREN'T ANY SIGNS OF ANT INCREASE! GOOD SCOTT!

EVERYONE TO THEIR PLANTATIONS! WE HAVEN'T ANY TIME TO LOSE! THE ANTS WILL EAT EVERYTHING! HURRY!

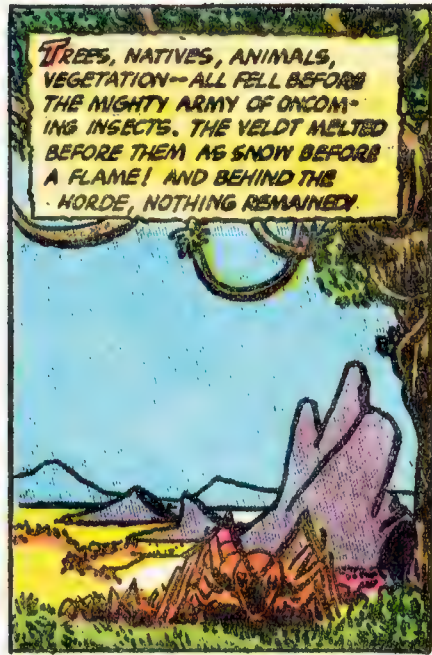
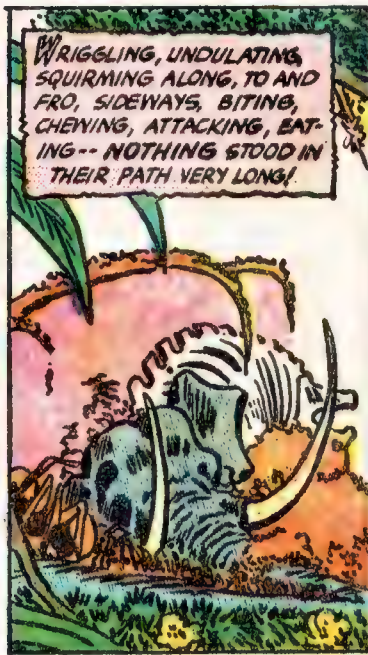
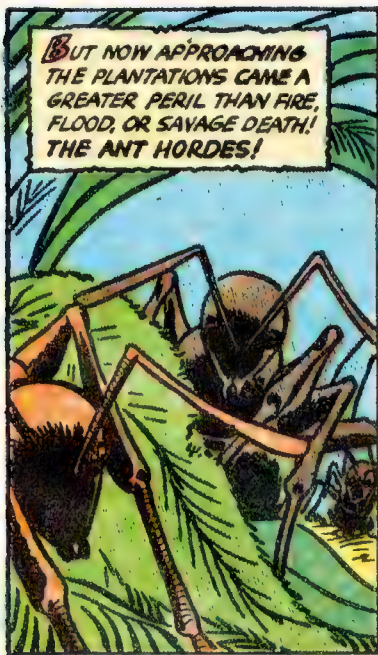
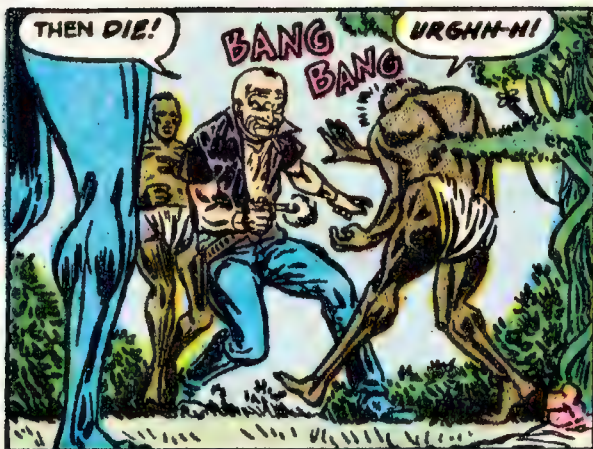
WAIT, YOU COWARDLY FOOLS! WE CAN FIGHT THEM! *WAIT!*



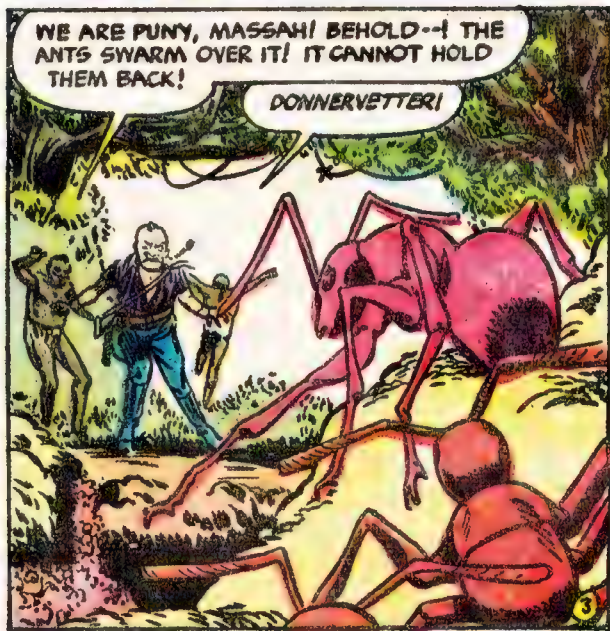
YOU--COME WITH ME! WE'LL CALL ALL THE NATIVES IN THIS DISTRICT TO FIGHT WITH ME AGAINST THESE PESTY ANTS!

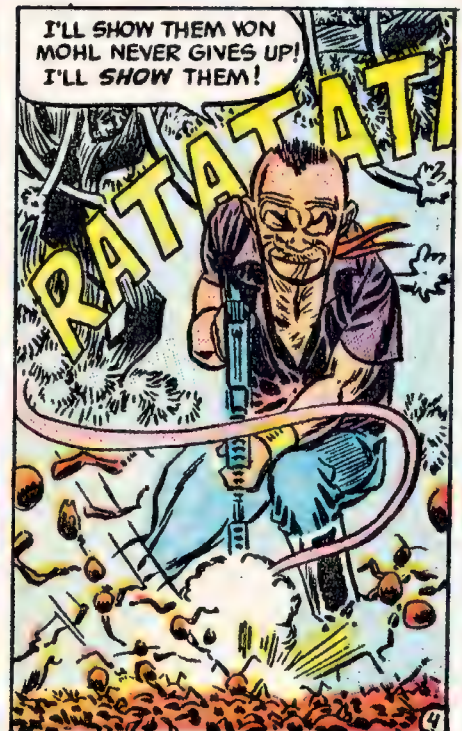
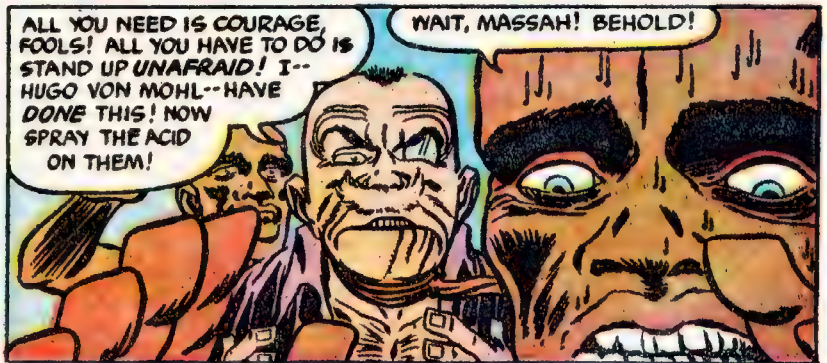
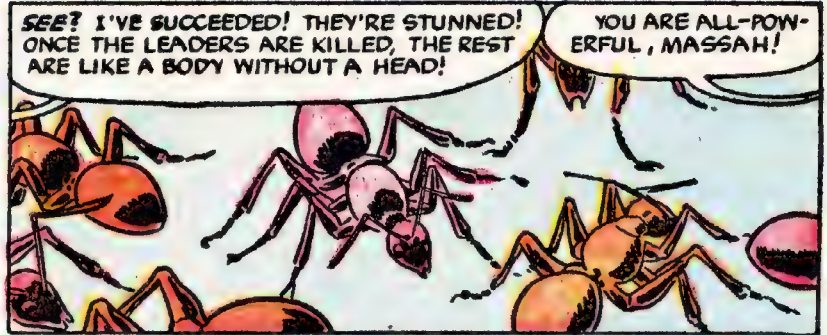
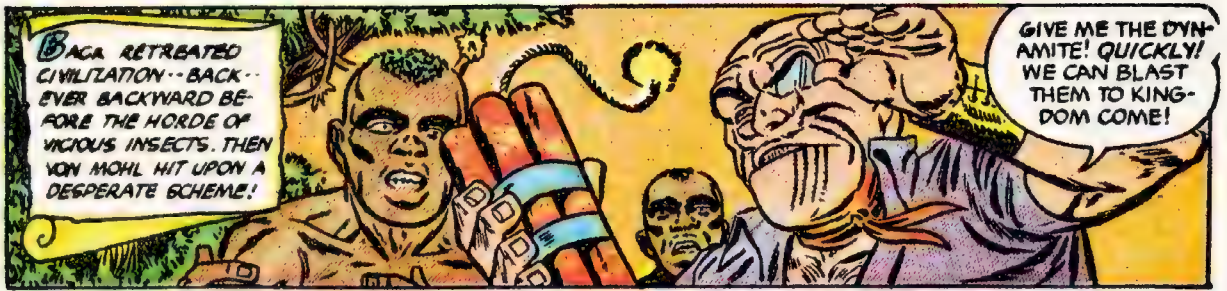
NO MASSAH! WE DIE! ANTS STRONG! ANTS KILL EVERYONE! *I NOT GO!*





BUT ONE PERSON ALONE DARED DEFY THEM. HUGO VON MOHL WAS MADE OF STERNER STUFF--AND ONLY HE--STOOD GROUND AND FOUGHT!





**BUT MACHINE-GUN BULLETS
COULDN'T STOP BILLIONS--
TRILLIONS--OF INSECTS!
VON MOHL AND HIS ARMY
OF MEN RETREATED BEFORE
THE ONCOMING RED-DEATH!**

**CUT DOWN THE TREES
AND LET THEM SWARM
OVER THEM! THIS WILL
GIVE US TIME TO DIG A
MOAT AROUND THE
PLANTATION! QUICKLY!**

**BUT WHERE
SHALL WE GET
THE WATER FOR
THE MOAT,
MASSAH!**

**THE FIELD DYKES, STUPID! WE'LL
CHANNEL THE WATER INTO THE DUG
MOAT. THE HARVEST WILL BE RUINED
--BUT THESE ANTS SHALL BE STOPPED!**

**SOON MY PLANS WILL TRIUMPH AND
THESE INSECTS SHALL FADE AWAY AS
ALL OBSTACLES HAVE FADED AWAY
BEFORE MY MIGHT! I'LL HAVE
THAT MOAT DUG IN NO TIME!**

**AND SOON-- VON MOHL'S
PLANS WERE REALIZED...**

**THROW.
OPEN THE
DYKES! NOW
--QUICKLY!
QUICKLY!**

**YES,
MASSAH!**

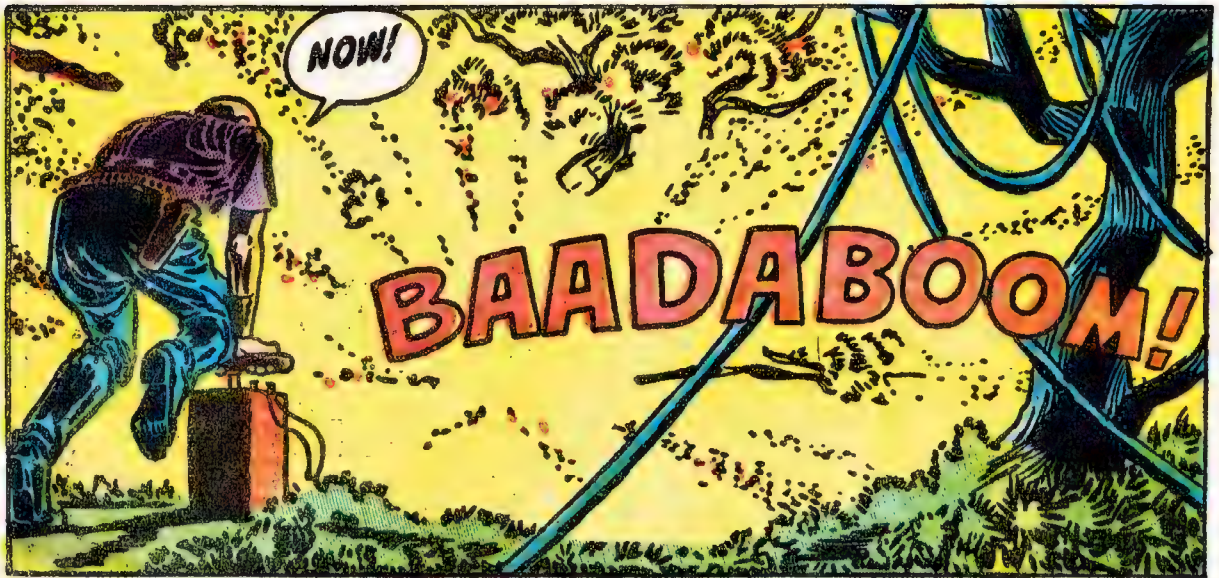


**WITH THE MOAT FILLED WITH
WATER, VON MOHL AND HIS
MEN WAITED--AND WATCHED--**

**AS THE GREAT RED HORDE
CAME UPON THE TREE BARRIER--**

**AND SLOWLY THE SPEARHEAD
BROKE THROUGH AND CHEWED
ITS WAY TO THE VERY EDGE
OF THE MOAT--**

THEN--

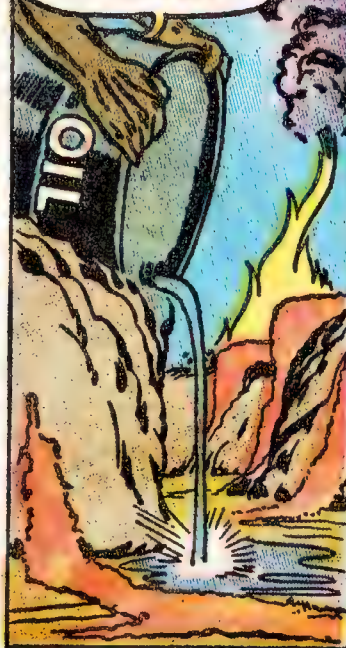


AND WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARED, YOU MONK STILL WASN'T TRIUMPHANT OVER THE RED CREATURE!

THE ANTS COME ACROSS THE MOAT, MASSAH! WHAT SHALL WE DO NOW?

DO-DO, STUPID! WE SHALL DUMP TONS OF OIL ON THE MOAT AND SET FIRE TO IT --AT ONCE!

ENOUGH! NOW SET FIRE TO THE MOAT! IT IS GOING EXACTLY AS I HAVE PLANNED!



THE ANTS HAVE SHRIVELED UP, MASSAH! THEY ARE TURNING AWAY! THE OIL SEARS THEIR INSIDES!

HA, HA... I TOLD YOU SO! NOTHING WILL EVER TAKE THIS PLANTATION AWAY FROM ME! NOT MAN--WEATHER--NOR INSECTS!

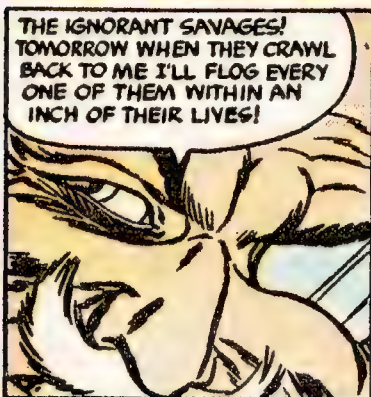




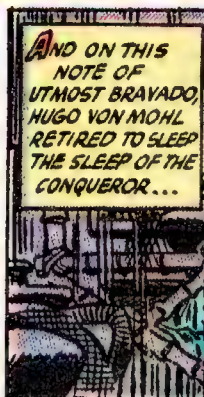
THEN AS VON MOHL
RAVED AND RANTED,
THE NATIVES SLOWLY
INCHED AWAY UNTIL--

HEY! WHERE ARE YOU
GOING? COME BACK!

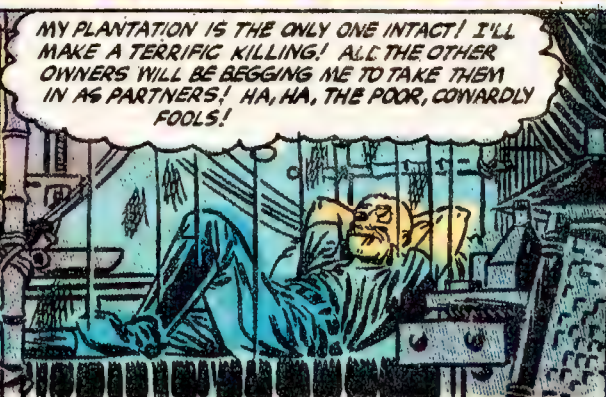
NO, NO, MASSAH! THEY WILL BE
BACK! THEY ARE CUNNING DEVILS!



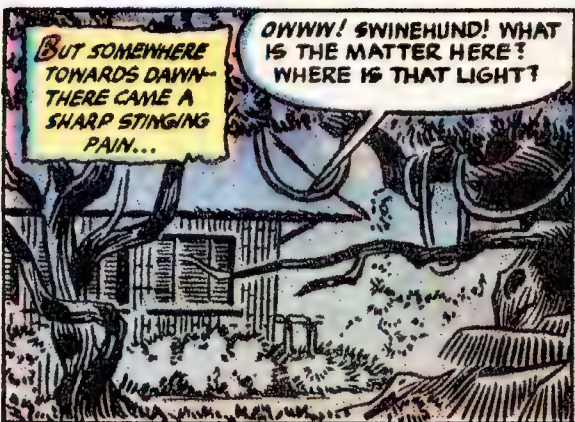
THE IGNORANT SAVAGES!
TOMORROW WHEN THEY CRAWL
BACK TO ME I'LL FLOG EVERY
ONE OF THEM WITHIN AN
INCH OF THEIR LIVES!



AND ON THIS
NOTE OF
UTMOST BRAVADO,
HUGO VON MOHL
RETIRED TO SLEEP
THE SLEEP OF THE
CONQUEROR...

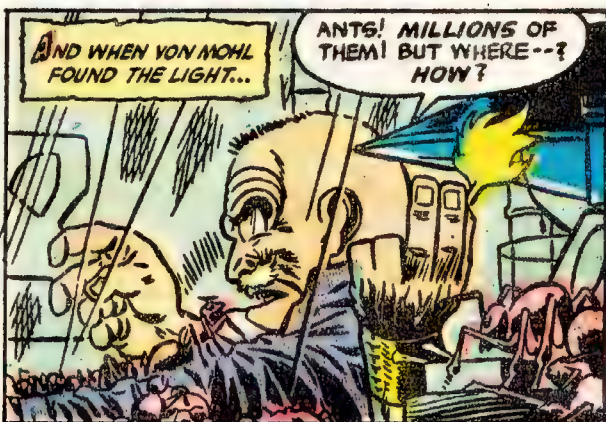


MY PLANTATION IS THE ONLY ONE INTACT! I'LL
MAKE A TERRIFIC KILLING! ALL THE OTHER
OWNERS WILL BE BEGGING ME TO TAKE THEM
IN AS PARTNERS! HA, HA, THE POOR, COWARDLY
FOOLS!



BUT SOMEWHERE
TOWARDS DAWN--
THERE CAME A
SHARP STINGING
PAIN...

OWWWW! SWINEHUND! WHAT
IS THE MATTER HERE?
WHERE IS THAT LIGHT?



AND WHEN VON MOHL
FOUND THE LIGHT...

ANTS! MILLIONS OF
THEM! BUT WHERE--?
HOW?



AINEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

AND THEN HUGO VON
MOHL SAW HOW! HE SAW
THE HUGE HOLE IN THE
PLANTATION FLOOR AND
REALIZED THAT THE ANTS
THAT COULDN'T WIN
OVER HIM IN THE AIR AND
ON THE GROUND, HAD DUG
UNDERNEATH THE MOAT
AND CAME UP THE OTHER
SIDE! BUT BY THIS TIME
HUGO VON MOHL'S EDUCA-
TION WAS TOO LATE!

THE END

CDC

THIS MAGAZINE IS
HAUNTED

No 19

THIS MAGAZINE IS

HAUNTED

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION

10¢

I DEFY YOU TO
READ THE SPINE
CHILLING STORIES
IN THIS ISSUE!!!





STRANGE
SUSPENSE STORIES

Nº 22

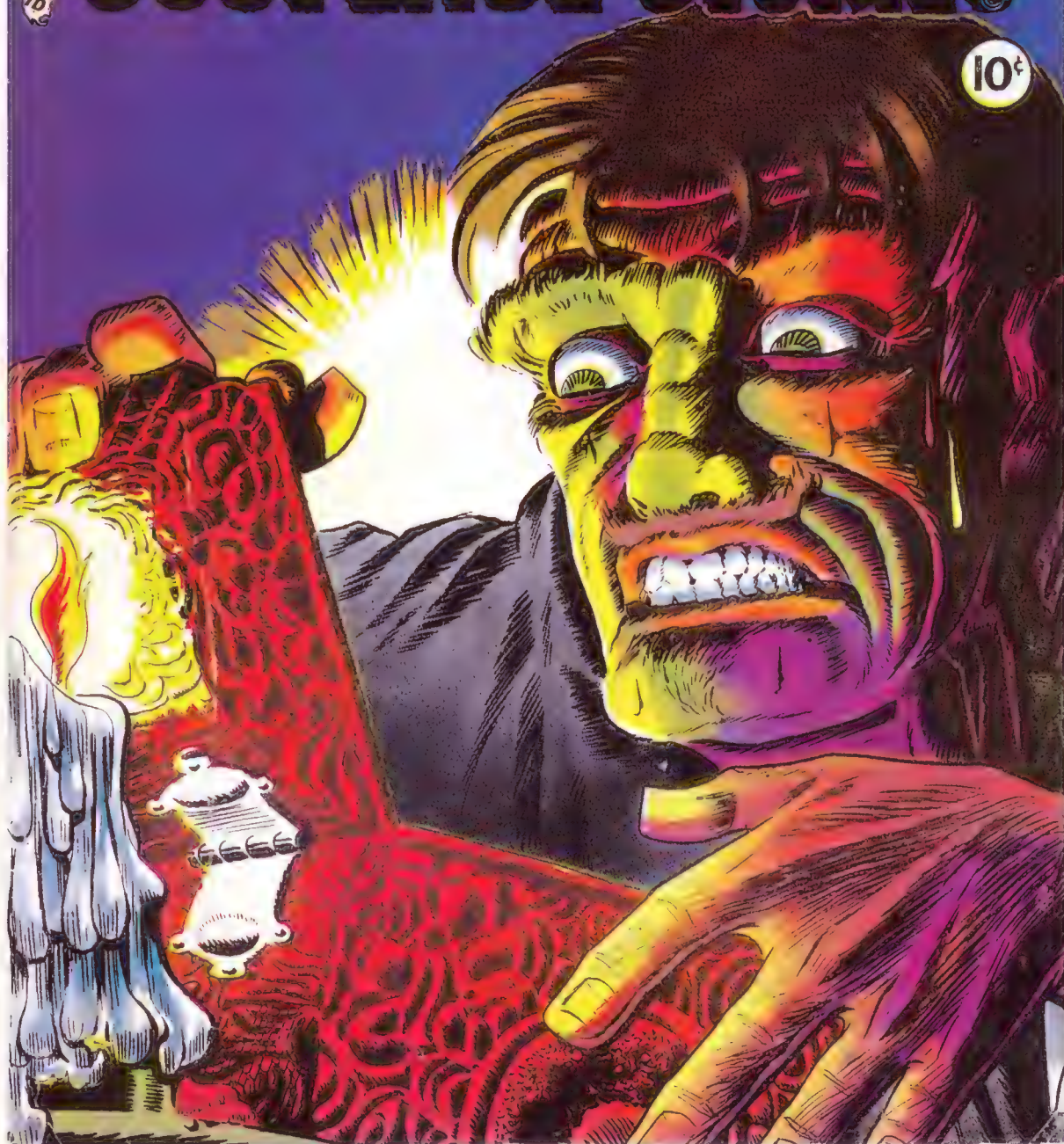


STRANGE

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION

SUSPENSE STORIES

10¢





THE THING

No 17

WEIRD TALES OF SUSPENSE

THE THING!

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10¢





THIS MAGAZINE IS
HAUNTED

Nº 21



THIS MAGAZINE IS

HAUNTED

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from here
to
INSANITY

DIG THIS CRAZY COMIC!

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE



AUTHORITY

FROM HERE TO

INSANITY

10¢

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION



No. 10

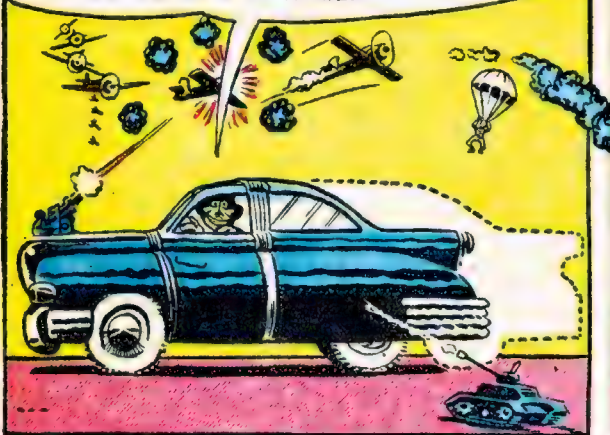
DIG THIS CRAZY COMIC



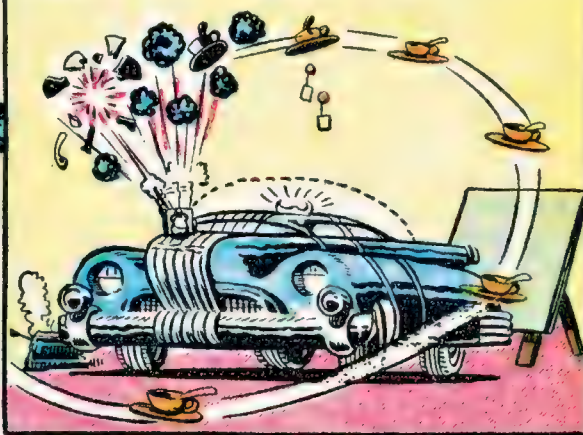
FROM HERE TO INSANITY PRESENTS FROM TODAY'S DRAWING BOARDS TO TOMORROW'S OVERCROWDED STREETS AND HIGHWAYS A FEW OF THE MANY CARS PEOPLE WILL BE SMASHING UP -- SWEATING TO PAY OFF OR AVOID GETTING RUN OVER BY -- SO LOOK CLOSELY -- ONE MAY PRESENT YOU WITH A FREE TRIP TO YOUR LOCAL HOSPITAL ---



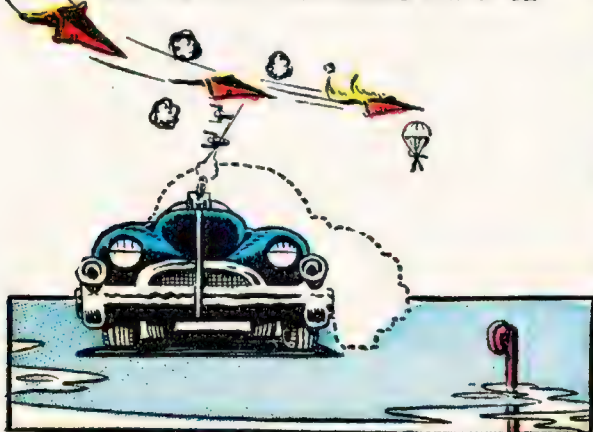
SEE HOW THE LENGTH SHRINKS TO FIT A SPACE TOO SMALL FOR ITS NORMAL SHAPE, IT CAN ALSO BE DRIVEN IN THIS POSITION IN HEAVY TRAFFIC OR FOR SHORT TRIPS -- FOR LONG DRIVES, LENGTH IS EXPANDED TO NORMAL SIZE, CUTS DOWN THE DISTANCE YOU HAVE TO TRAVEL ---



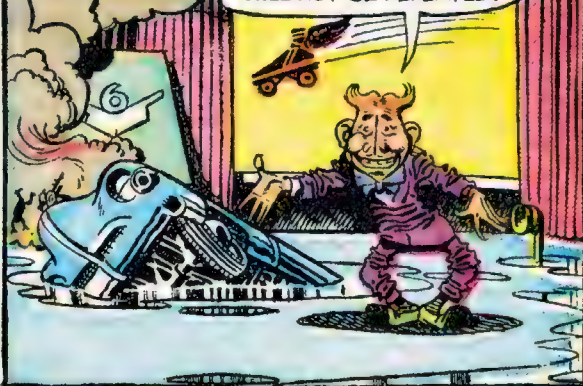
IT CAN ALSO REDUCE ITS HEIGHT FOR ANY CONDITION --- LOW CEILING, BRIDGES, CLOUDS OR TO AVOID BEING NOTICED, WHILE DRIVING -- PEOPLE IN SHADY OCCUPATIONS, OR THOSE WHO OWE MONEY WILL CERTAINLY BENEFIT FROM IT ---



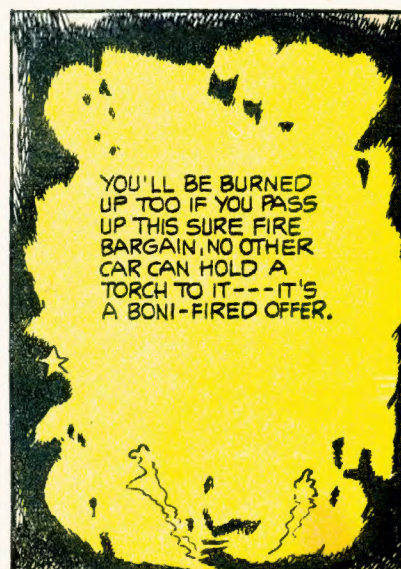
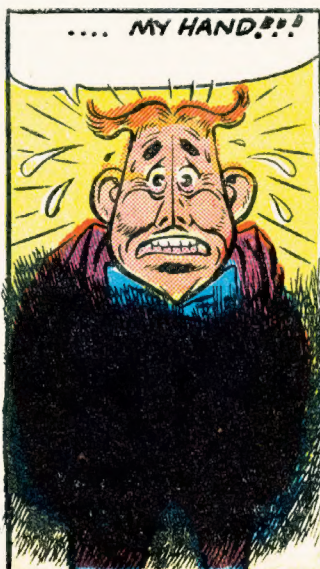
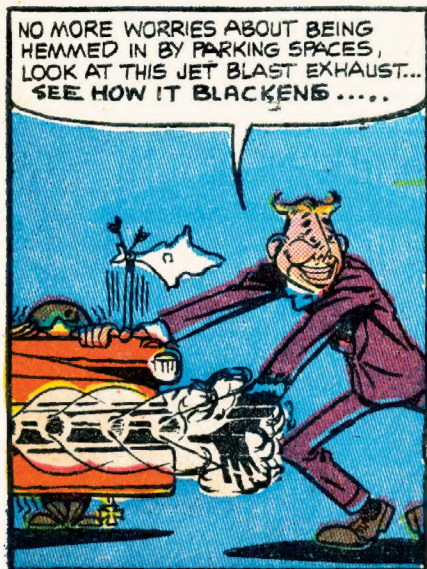
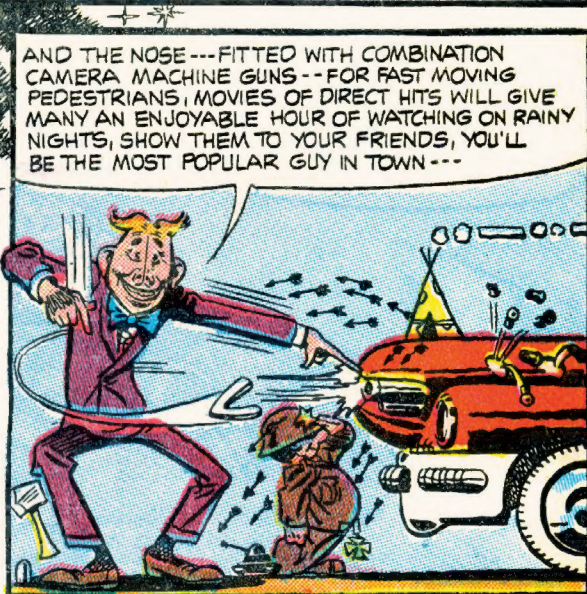
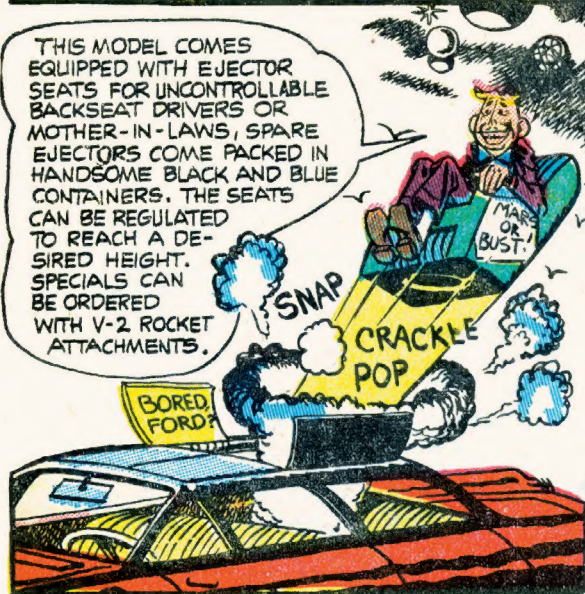
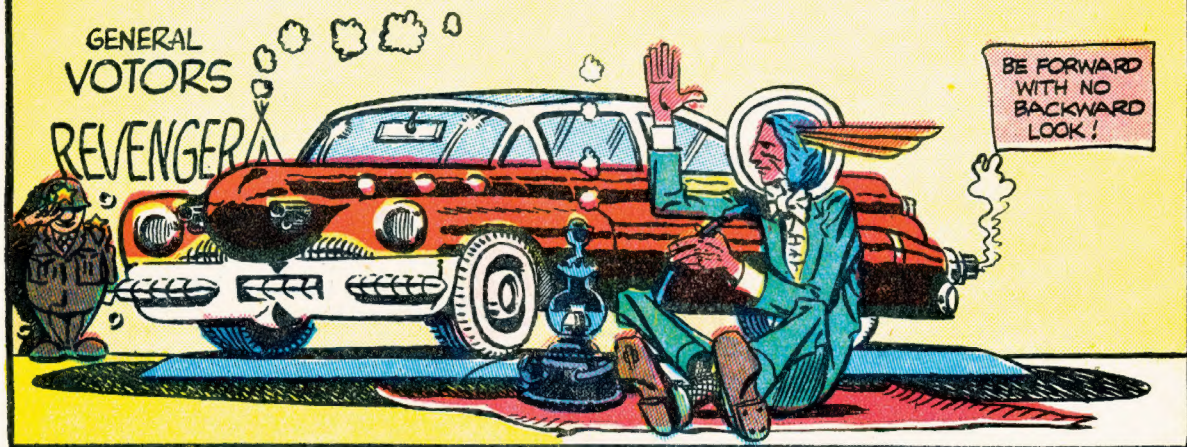
AND WIDTH --- FRIENDS, DO YOU LOSE PRECIOUS HOURS OF SLEEP AND WORRY ABOUT YOUR WIFE BANGING UP THE FENDERS WHILE PARKING OR BACKING INTO THE GARAGE --- PUT AWAY THE NERVE TONIC, STOP YOUR PACING AND LOOK HOW THE WIDTH COMPRESSES WITH EASE --



YES --- IT'S DEFINITELY THE CAR FOR THE WISE PERSON WHO IS AWARE OF ALL THESE PROBLEMS, SO TRY IT ON OUR FREE 14-DAY HOME TRIAL PLAN, THOSE ACCEPTING OUR GENEROUS OFFER WILL RECEIVE ABSOLUTELY FREE A NEW **BLACK DUNGEON BODY-STRETCHING RACK**, THIS OFFER CANNOT, SHOULD NOT, AND WILL NOT BE REPEATED!



NOW HERE WE HAVE THE CAR FOR THOSE WHO SEEK SELF PROTECTION, FOR THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ABUSED OR TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF BY PEDESTRIANS AND OTHER CAR OPERATORS ALIKE -- TO GET REVENGE -- WE OFFER -- **THE REVENGER**. THIS CAR IS APPROVED BY **UNKNOWN, INC.** AND THE **DOWN WITH PEOPLE ORGANIZATION**, IT HAS BEEN NUMBER ONE ON THE **HIT AND RUN PARADE** FOR THE PAST 976 WEEKS ---



NOW THE FOREIGN

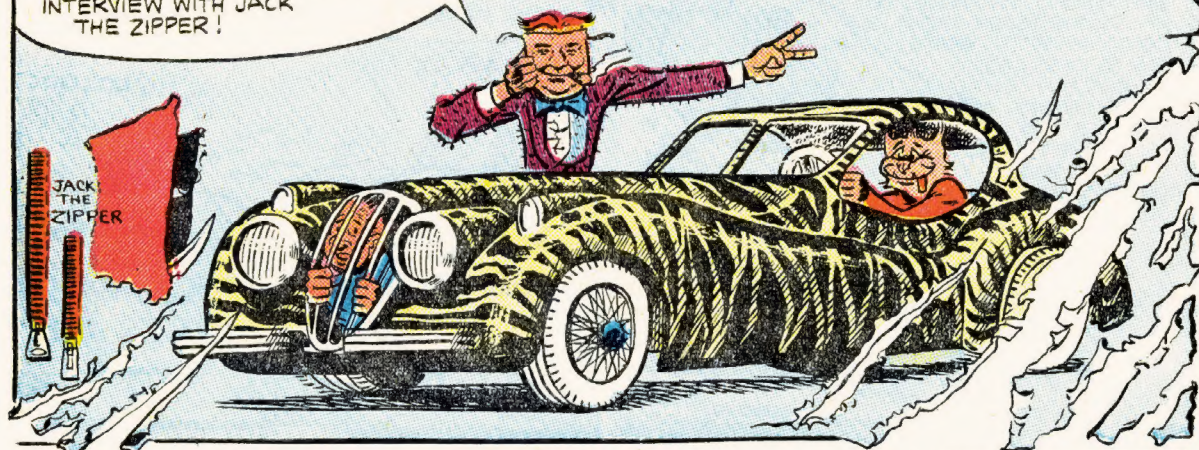
FROM BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN--BUILT ALONG PARTY LINES, MODELED AFTER THE FIVE YEAR PLAN AND COMPLETELY PURGED --RUNS ON SATTelite AND VETO POWER--CONTAINS POWERFUL RED CELL--PRE COLD WAR WOODEN RUNNERS, WILL CO-EXIST WITH CAPITALIST CARS AND CAN BE PURCHASED ON THE CONVENIENT SIBERIAN LAY-AWAY PLAN --



ENGLAND--

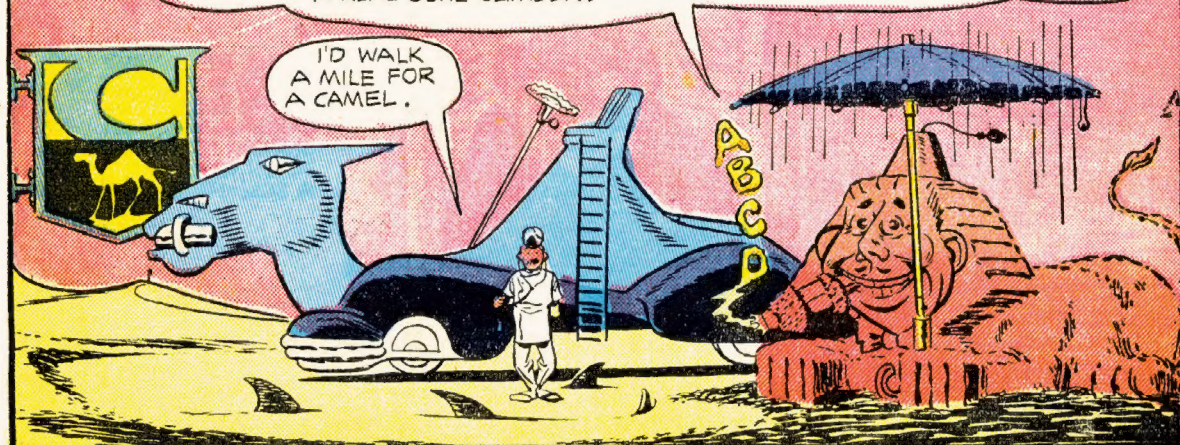
HERE WE HAVE THE JAGGER --40 MILES TO THE GALLON OF TEA--EQUIPPED WITH FOG HORN, FOG LIGHTS, FOG SKID TIRES, FOG VOICED RADIO AND THE FIRST 25 PEOPLE ORDERING THIS MODEL WILL BE PRESENTED WITH A FREE

TWO WEEK ALL EXPENSE PAID STAY IN THE TOWER OF LONDON AND AN INTERVIEW WITH JACK THE ZIPPER!



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